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EARLY
CHURCH HISTORY

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FOUR LECTURES

ON SOME EPOCHS OF

EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

DELIVERED IN ELY CATHEDRAL

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BY

CHARLES MERIVALE, D.D.

DEAN OF ELY

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PREFACE.

THE SPECIAL OBJECT of these Lectures is sufficiently indicated in the Introduction to the first of them. I should not think it necessary to prefix any other notice to them, but that I feel it right to mention that in preparing the first and second I have put myself under some obligation to the ingenious essays of M. Bungener and M. Pressensé, published some years ago in a volume entitled 'Séances Historiques à Genève,' and in the third I have allowed myself to insert, with slight alterations, two or three paragraphs from a little work of my own on the 'General History of Rome.' The fall of Rome and the building of the Christian Church are so closely connected, that I found myself travelling for most part of my way on lines very nearly parallel with those with which I had been before familiar.

The delivery of these Lectures, which were composed with a view to a limited number of young

students, was actually attended, much beyond my expectation, by friends and neighbours of various ages, both male and female, and no doubt with a various amount of preparation for deriving instruction from them. I may say that I was much gratified at finding that they possessed some interest for a wider circle of hearers than I could have anticipated; but I am led, from many circumstances, to believe that the light which ecclesiastical and secular history mutually throw upon each other is becoming more and more keenly appreciated among us—

> Facies non una duabus,
> Nec diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum.

I plead this excuse for the publication of a little volume which makes no pretension to special research or originality of view.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

PAGE

ST. AMBROSE, AND THE UNION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WITH THE STATE 1

LECTURE II.

ST. AUGUSTINE: SOME LESSONS FROM HIS LIFE AND TEACHING 53

LECTURE III.

ST. LEO THE GREAT, AND THE RISE OF THE PAPACY . 106

LECTURE IV.

ST. GREGORY, AND THE EARLY MISSIONS OF THE CHURCH 160

EPOCHS

IN

EARLY CHURCH HISTORY.

LECTURE I.

ST. AMBROSE AND THE UNION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WITH THE STATE.

My Lord Bishop,—You have expressed a wish that some readings should from time to time be given in this place on subjects connected with theology, and especially with ecclesiastical history, at which the clergy in our neighbourhood and such of the laity as have some leisure to spare, and more particularly our Divinity students, together, possibly, with the upper classes of our grammar-scholars, should be invited to attend. Your Lordship has honoured me with a request that I should commence the series, which I willingly obey. Our limits will hardly allow me to make the preface which might be expected at the outset of my undertaking. I must content myself with saying that I shall address my remarks

principally to our students and learners, and ask the indulgence of others among my audience, to some of whom I shall doubtless only repeat over again events and ideas with which they have been long familiar, while it is just possible that there may be a few who will be hardly sufficiently advanced in scholarship to follow my remarks with critical intelligence.

I am to give you some account to-day of the political establishment of the Christian Church, and of its union with the secular Empire of Rome in the middle of the fourth century, taking the illustrious Ambrose Bishop of Milan as the central figure of the epoch. With an ample subject before me and limited space, I must ask you to excuse me if I review the antecedent period very briefly and introduce you to my subject with the least possible delay.

When the Emperor Constantine adopted the Gospel for his own personal belief, the faith of Jesus Christ did not thereupon become in any sense the religion of the Empire. By the Edict of Milan, in the year 313, Christianity first became legally tolerated. Before that period it had stood merely in the condition of the few creeds which, among the many which found favour in various provinces, had never received the sanction of the general law. The

decrees, indeed, which had been directly levelled against it had been partial and occasional only, and such hostile enactments might be suspended or withheld for long periods together. A great part of the third century afforded at least a breathing-time, during which the Faith enjoyed a certain security, sufficient to favour its extension, but at the same time to deprave in some degree its principles. The terrible persecutions of Decius and Diocletian braced again its moral fibre, and we can hardly doubt that the high tone which these trials engendered among the believers helped to engage the attention, the interest, and finally the conviction of the first Imperial convert.

But Constantine was aware that the Christians were but a fraction of the whole mass of his people; that it was not to such partial support that the government of the world he had made his own could be at once shifted; that as a ruler of many nations he must temporize with all; and so deeply was he impressed with the political exigencies of the crisis that he allowed himself to keep his personal faith in suspense almost to his last moments. He accepted the homage of the Christian bishops on the one hand, and of the Pagan priesthood on the

other, permitting himself to act as the Head of the Church upon earth, even while he assumed with the title of Sovereign Pontiff the chief control of the Pagan idolatries.

Constantine, then, did not confer on Christianity the political position of a state Religion. Even had he nominally done so it would not have altered the fact that the Emperor and the State were still, and long continued to be, essentially Pagan. We may readily suppose that the Emperor's personal example, with the favour he plainly showed to the new religion, which indeed he virtually accepted long before he submitted to the rite of baptism, induced a crowd of officers and courtiers to conform to it, though others, ruder and more independent, may have been all the more repelled from it thereby. There were still Romans of the old stamp among the ruling classes of the falling Empire not less stubborn in their religious than in their political principles. We may imagine that in some eyes the Gospel lost much of its spiritual attraction when it appeared so suddenly prosperous, while the ancient creeds became endeared to their latest votaries by falling under the shadow of the Imperial displeasure, and by the first mutterings of the impending storm of disestablishment.

But the Pagans were not in fact easily persuaded that their ancient religious institutions were menaced with any serious danger. They had seen many new forms of faith rise and fall beside them in the course of ages. Judaism had at one time invaded the highest ranks of Roman society, and secured itself a legal recognition through the countenance of august personages. Other forms of Syrian worship had followed in the train of Judaism, and had emptied, while they were in fashion, the temples of the old Italian divinities. The throne itself had been occupied by a dynasty from the East, which had leagued itself with the sensuous fanaticism of the worship of the sun. Throughout the third century the cult of Mithras had been perhaps more popular even at Rome than the cult of Jupiter. The cult of Magna Mater had been introduced from Phrygia, of Isis and Anubis from Egypt, of the Dea Cælestis from Carthage, and had been admitted to a legal status in the city; but all in turn had forfeited their attractions, while the gods of Latium still clung to their ancient seats with obstinate tenacity. Again and again these venerable powers had seemed to recover their influence, when the Government, under stress of manifold perils,

sought to revive the fortunes of the Empire by recourse to primitive traditions. So it was that when the Christian Faith, the faith, as it seemed to the world at large of a mere sect of Jewish fanatics, became suddenly flattered by the favour of the Cæsar, the court, and the army, the multitude at first looked on with wonder and curiosity, and presently with deep mortification, but still refused to acknowledge the full significance of the spiritual revolution before them. They still clung to the assurance that as it had been before, so would it be again; the new religion would soon be unmasked and discredited; the superstition of the Jew and the Syrian would be but a nine-days' wonder; the gods of Rome, who had so long maintained the glories of the Empire, would surely in due time regain their ascendancy. The Pagan faction, secure of its ultimate success, made no attempt to thwart its ruler's caprice, and was content simply to ignore the facts before it. It continued to perform all the rites of the ancient faith; perhaps, as falling creeds are wont to do, even to enhance their prominence and significance. It still sanctified all public acts with the old Pagan usages; still hailed its sovereign as the supreme minister of its religion, and attributed his acts and caprices

to celestial impulses; still prescribed the old vows to the old divinities, in the name of Cæsar and the Senate; still, in short, kept up the specific forms of Pagan worship even to the deification of the Emperor deceased and the invocation of his divine spirit while still living. On the other hand, it abstained studiously from any allusion to the place which Christianity now actually held in public life. It made an effort, a laborious effort, to pass over the phenomenon in total silence. Throughout the few remains of popular literature of the age of Constantine we can trace, it seems, no single reference to the existence of the Christian Church or Creed. Even at the end of the century the poet Claudian, in versifying, as is his wont, all the chief events of contemporary history, has not one word to say of the new religion, which in his day had effected a complete revolution both in Church and State.

Both the Cæsar and his subjects had now, indeed, equally agreed to shut their eyes to the gulf which actually separated their ideas and sentiments. Constantine withdrew tacitly from Rome, as if conscious of the religious difficulty. Some say that he was driven from his Pagan capital by remorse at the murder of his son there; some were content to

ascribe the foundation of Constantinople to views of secular policy; others, again, supposed that he was piqued at the affronts put upon him by the populace when, after holding the Council at Nicæa, he was assailed with outcries and menaces in the streets of Rome. So it was, however, that with no cause assigned, no deliberate policy declared, he abandoned the centre of the ancient Paganism, at which neither he nor his successors ever again resided, leaving the imperial city to retain for another century the first place in the Pagan world, while he enthroned the Church of Christ in the New Rome on the Bosporus. So it was that each rival power, each hostile principle, agreed serenely to ignore the most patent acts of the other.

The Cæsars who followed in the next generation, when they found it politic to make a sojourn in the West, generally took up their residence at Milan, but never at Rome. It was from Milan that they could most promptly direct the military operations required by the dangers which thickened on the Rhine and Danube. The political importance of the capital of northern Italy had thus become second only to that of Rome, while the remembrance of the edicts which had issued from it might encircle the

throne it offered to the Cæsar with peculiar veneration. Milan became now the Christian while Rome continued to be the Pagan capital of the West. Each religion, it might perhaps be thought, would remain content with its own share of the Empire. But hence it was that the Church, in the secondary position it must occupy in its adversary's stronghold, could play for another century only a secondary part in the general career of the faith triumphant. The absence of the sovereign from the ancient metropolis, which was destined to play so great a part in the end for the advancement of the Roman See or Papacy, operated at first to retard the progress of the Church at Rome, and to cripple the energies of its hierarchy. It might have seemed at the time as though the political future of the Christian Church pointed in some other direction; the Bishop of Rome might seem for a time to be lost in the midst of a city which the Imperial policy had now definitively abandoned to Paganism. Elsewhere, both east and west, the new faith might march forward gloriously; but at Rome at least—at Rome, which had become a present deity, a supernatural energy, in the eyes of the Pagans—she must still give place to the Genius Loci, the genius of twelve illustrious centuries.

On considering the attitude thus assumed by the rival persuasions at this period we naturally ask ourselves, What was their relative force numerically? Upon this point various guesses have been hazarded, but no enquirer can speak with any precision. The data to which alone we can refer are both uncertain and conflicting. The early Christian writers seem to speak according to the object of the moment; sometimes they are prone to represent their brethren as already overflowing the Empire, even in the second or third century; sometimes as a feeble minority, as a little flock of sheep straying in the wilderness,—according as they wish to alarm their opponents with physical or overawe them with moral force. All, perhaps, that we can safely assume is, that the Christians, though still in a decided minority, were more numerous in the East than in the West, where they certainly formed but a small proportion of the whole population. In Gaul, in Spain, in Britain, even in Italy and Rome itself, the mass of the people were far less advanced intellectually than in Greece or Asia, and far less susceptible of the spiritual culture implied by a disposition to accept the pure truths of the Gospel. But it is most worthy of remark that it was from the West notwithstanding that the im-

pulse was given to the general conversion of the Empire which ultimately followed. Constantine was bred in the West, while his father Constantius had commanded as Cæsar in Gaul. Constantius himself had been noted as a favourer of the brethren, and had refused to join in persecuting them. We must further bear in mind that, besides the genuine adherents either of the Christian or the Pagan creed, there were doubtless a large number, possibly the bulk of the whole population, who cannot be regarded in strictness as attached either to the one or the other. But the Christians, a small, an oppressed, but a growing body, were all devoted heart and soul to the creed which had enlisted them; while Paganism was a mere negative title which might be applied to every one who was simply not a Christian. The honest votaries of the old classical mythology of Greece and Rome were no doubt comparatively few; the worshippers of the Celtic and Teutonic divinities may have been fewer still; those of Mithras and of other Oriental deities were probably more numerous than either of these classes; while the so-called Philosophers, a large but fluctuating body, positively rejected any religious creed at all. But, besides all these, there still remained a vast mass of the un-

attached and irreclaimable, who were sunk in mere carelessness and indifference. Accordingly, it is possible that a really small number of genuine Christians could balance any one of the Pagan denominations, and even be compared with little disadvantage with the actual devotees of the whole of them together.

But it was after all in their moral force that the real superiority of the Christians lay. There can be no doubt that the active and growing strength of the Roman world was truly theirs—theirs was the future of all civilised society. They were the men who had risen in numbers and influence in spite of three centuries of persecution, perhaps in consequence of them. They had borne hardness; they had drawn strength and vigour from the storms in which they had been nurtured. How much then might now be expected of them, now when they were floating upon the wave of success, conscious of the power within them, at the same time that they felt a divine assurance of the promise of final triumph? They could speak with confidence in the face of adversaries who were more and more visibly cowed with the sense of decline and discomfiture. Still more, the Christians were the men of the highest moral character; honest, industrious, self-

denying, good husbands, good parents, men who had made many sacrifices, and could make many more, men who might be trusted. In the eyes of far-seeing and thinking men their triumph was already assured, and Constantine, a man of great common sense combined in a singular measure with an ardent imagination, might easily persuade himself that, however few in number, the Christians were the stuff of which empires are constituted. This was the sign of victory in which he trusted; not the feigned or fancied cross in the heavens, which makes so pretty a legend in ecclesiastical history.

We may suppose, indeed, that the favour thus unexpectedly showered on the new faith by the Imperial government would tend inevitably to reverse the proportions of the two persuasions, or rather of the two parties, which now divided the Roman world. Powerful as the example of rulers has always been in such matters, it would never perhaps be more so than at the moment when Paganism, corrupt and effete, had lost all the spirit of a real faith, and when, as we shall see, Christianity was only too ready to accept overtures to the easy compromise which its rivals soon began to offer it. Nevertheless, the progress of the Church of Christ was really slower and less com-

plete than might have been expected. Some allowance, as we have seen, must be made for the spirit of pique and the wounded pride of a class so deeply prejudiced on all matters of sentiment as the magnates of Roman society. But Paganism, it must be added, developed at her last gasp a new principle of vitality, and nerved herself for a desperate conflict along her whole line. While the Emperors, partly from policy, partly from their personal indifference, abstained from overt measures against the doomed superstitions, she still flattered herself that her end was not come, and might yet be averted. Paganism had not fallen at the first blow, she had not fled in confusion on the first turn of fortune. The Pagans dreamt that the danger was passed, or postponed at least for a season. The pendulum must swing back again. They still cherished in their hearts a conviction that the existence of their faith was indissolubly connected with that of the Empire itself; and the day had hardly yet arrived when the turmoil of Goths and Germans on the frontier could alarm them for the ultimate safety of the Empire. Such was the sentiment which inspired Julian with the preposterous idea of reviving the worship of the gods of mythology; but Julian, if he succeeded at all, even

with the Pagan vulgar, was never anything but a laughing-stock to the more intelligent even among the nominal Pagans themselves. Julian, however, was cut off in the year 363, and the feeble reaction which he had set in motion in the course of his short reign was at once reversed. The Emperors Valens and Valentinian were once more Christians, and the world proceeded to conform more and more widely to the fashion of their opinion. Rome almost alone stood sullenly aloof. Among all the Bishops of Rome there was none, nor till the next century did any arise, with ability to give an impulse to the new faith at the focus of unbelief, or disturb the influence which the ancient systems still enjoyed in the Senate and among the chief rulers of the capital. The throne of the Western Cæsars was now planted definitively at Milan; and now it is that the illustrious Ambrose, of whom I am to speak more particularly, comes upon the stage.

Ambrose was of noble Gaulish extraction, born at Lyons, or possibly at Trèves, in the year 340. His Greek name, suggesting the meaning of 'immortal,' was probably given him by Christian relatives. We must not suppose, however, that he was baptized in infancy. The baptism of Ambrose is recorded at a

much later period of his life. His father, indeed, seems to have been a Pagan, but to have died while the child was yet of tender years; it was from his mother and his sister that he received his early Christian training. The future bishop and father of the Church was bred for a civil career. He gave precocious evidence of talents for forensic oratory; of him, too, the old story is repeated that a swarm of bees once rested on his lips in his infancy, and the happy presage was duly accepted. Ambrose practised at the bar at Rome, and at the age of twenty-five was noted as the most promising of advocates at the centre of all civil accomplishments. He was thence advanced to the post of governor of Liguria, in the north of Italy; but this perhaps did not require residence, for we next hear of him as established at Milan. 'You are more fit to be a bishop than a governor,' was said of him by a high civil authority at the time; but whether ironically we cannot tell. However this may be, the words carried their fortune with them. At this moment, the Arian bishop Auxentius died. The success of the Arian party in the West had already culminated, and was just beginning to decline. Parties were almost equally balanced, and the choice of a chief pastor of

the Christian flock seemed on the point of being decided by a violent and perhaps a sanguinary struggle. On the day appointed, the multitude of electors met in the principal church (even at that time, even at Milan, the Christians could hardly have been a majority of the population), and the governor hastened there to prevent the expected collision. While he is addressing the people and striving to calm their passions, lo! a child's voice is heard none knew whose or whence—*neque erat cognoscere promptum unde, sed audita est*—exclaiming, 'Ambrose, bishop!' The crowd took up the cry, and repeated it from mouth to mouth; and so Ambrose became Bishop of Milan by popular acclamation.

Some critics have imagined that this famous incident was prepared beforehand, but, as far as we can judge, there seems to have been no person or party especially interested in it. As for Ambrose himself, the story goes on to assure us that he was distressed and alarmed at the unexpected issue, and even went so far as to pretend to some gross irregularities and immoral enormities, in order to scare his admirers. This, indeed, is a foolish gloss, such as might almost suffice to discredit the incident altogether. But who shall say that so strange a story is not, after

all, a mythical invention, in explanation of an election which to the next generation seemed clearly providential? The appointment of Ambrose to the see of Milan at that precise moment led doubtless to a marked crisis in the fortunes of the Church, and to the apprehension of the age it might appear that it could not have taken place without some patent token of Divine interference. Certainly, such a story occurring in secular annals would be regarded as plainly mythical by the modern school of historical criticism. But, however this may be, its value would be recognised as showing, even though it were an involuntary fiction, that the election of a bishop by the voice of the people might be accepted as valid at the time, and its validity sanctioned by the judgment of a later generation. 'I know but one bishop,' said the Emperor Theodosius, enthusiastically, ten years later, 'and that is Ambrose.' Another curious sign of contemporary opinion appears in the fact that Ambrose was not only a layman, but up to that moment had never been baptized. He was admitted immediately to the rite of Christian initiation, and received consecration a few days after.

Doubtless the circumstances of this extraordinary election recommended the new prelate to the con-

fidence of the Emperor Valentinian, who on his deathbed, in the year 375, entrusted his tender child Gratian to his favourite's special care. Gratian soon afterwards placed his able general Theodosius at the head of the Eastern provinces, and retained for himself the charge of the Western only, establishing his residence, as usual, at Milan. The temper of Ambrose was bold and haughty; the young prince was timid and compliant. The opportunity seemed to have arrived for advancing the Christian Church from the status of mere recognition to that of superiority and of exclusive support from the government. The Bishop recognised her opportunity, and began, it would seem, with demanding the suppression of heresy within the Christian pale itself. Ecclesiastical councils had decided on points of faith, and the Emperors had convened and presided at these councils. It might be urged, accordingly; that disregard of the decrees of councils was disloyalty to the sovereign, and as such might be legitimately punished by the secular arm. The ancient law of Majestas might still cast its shadow over the tribunals. It is not clear that as yet any reputed heretic had been directly subjected to legal penalties for his errors in belief. Priscillian, the first who is

supposed to have thus suffered, was charged at least at the same time with gross immorality, and Ambrose is said to have regretted the capital sentence which was pronounced upon him. Yet, when all was over, Ambrose could exclaim, not without exultation, 'The Emperor has shut the mouths of the heretics; would that he could change their hearts!' But from coercing a Christian heresy, even if technically illegal, it was but a short step to insult and degrade the long-sanctioned and legitimised forms of Paganism. Gratian himself, following the accepted traditions of the government, was not unwilling to temporize with the votaries of the Olympian consistory. Christian though he was, he did not scruple to allow, even to command, his father's apotheosis. The poet Ausonius celebrates this act as a signal mark of filial piety, and it is probable that Ausonius was himself at least a nominal Christian. Gratian took into his special favour the sophist Themistius, unquestionably a Pagan, and was rewarded with a panegyric, in which his name is associated with the praises of the ancient divinities. The Imperial believer is not displeased with the profane flattery of his unbelieving subjects. But suddenly, in the year 382, four years after his accession, he allows the world to know that

the influence of the Christian bishop is fully in the ascendant, and that Paganism is to suffer alike in its material interests and in the sentiments which are dearest to it. From this period we may date the first attacks upon the revenues of the old-established faith. Gratian seizes upon the endowments of the temples, which had been enriched through long ages of munificence by lands and treasures appropriated to their maintenance by their votaries. He revokes the various secular privileges of many priesthoods; he abolishes the venerable institution of the Vestals: perhaps he said to them, like a great Reformer of later days, 'Go, spin, ye jades'; but the nuns of modern times have never been invested with the exceeding sanctity which attached, in the eyes of the Pagans, to the sacred virgins, on whose inviolate purity the salvation of the Empire was reputed to depend. The decrees for the forfeiture of religious property were no doubt very imperfectly executed, as may be learnt from many historical notices of later times; but an affront, more odious than any injury, was still in store for the votaries of the ancient cult. Gratian commanded the removal of the altar and statue of Victory from the Senate-house at Rome itself.

We may not at first sight comprehend the full

significance which the Pagans in the city attached to this arbitrary act. We, Cambridge-men, have, I dare say, all remarked the statue of Victory which has stood, longer back than any of us can remember, in the Law-School of our University. I know not how many of us may be aware that this work of art originally graced our Senate-house, where it has been replaced, I believe, by the still more interesting effigy of William Pitt. Still I may venture to think that the noble hall wherein our degrees are conferred and our prizes awarded, wherein we receive and decorate our distinguished visitors, wherein so many of our illustrious alumni have contended for the honour of representing us in Parliament, was a fitter shrine for the statue of Victory than the examination-room or school, which is but a vestibule, as it were, to her temple. But the sentiment of the Romans of the declining Empire towards the goddess who had so long protected and distinguished them must have been far keener and more fervid. One by one the glories of the Olympians had faded from sight. They might engage the formal attentions of a scanty remnant among the vulgar, but hardly of more or worthier votaries. The religious feeling of the religious people of the day,

whether they were few or many, had become fixed upon certain abstractions of which Rome, the city itself, the pledge of Empire, approached nearest to a concrete substance; the rest were of the most shadowy nature, such as Fortune, and Fame, and Victory.[1] For Victory at least, or for the visible image of Victory, there could be no more fitting shrine, no place more touching to the popular imagination, than the fabric in which the august senators still met, and still repeated a faint echo of the debates by which the conquest of the world had been once directed. The statue of Victory, with the oblations on its altar, might still be regarded as a

[1] I will go a little out of my way to point out, to those who may care to refer to it, a passage from Statius (*Thebaid*, x. 628) at the end of the first century, in which the poet describes, with much circumlocution and apparent hesitation, a nameless goddess who inspires men with *virtus*, a quality which transcends mere *valour*, inasmuch as it bears some moral significance also :—

> 'Nunc age, quis stimulos et pulchræ gaudia mortis
> Addiderit juveni, &c. . . .
> Diva Jovis solio juxta comes, unde per orbem
> Rara dari, terrisque solet contingere, virtus;
> Seu pater omnipotens tribuit, sive ipsa capaces
> Elegit penetrare viros,' &c. . . . Comp. v. 783.

In simpler ages such a divine grace or impulse would have been ascribed to Minerva; but now a new motive power must be introduced for which no name or concrete personality ha been invented. We are admitted for once to the actual birth of an abstract divinity.

visible pledge of the Empire which had been acquired by three hundred conquests. The Pagans might well adore it as the palladium of the State now so fearfully threatened by foreign invasion and internal revolution.

The senators of Rome had long forfeited all their ancient power; but they had not forgotten the craft by which in other times their policy had been no less distinguished. To craft they must now resort. The old Pagan title of Pontifex Maximus had been for ages held inseparable from the Imperial dignity. Augustus had demanded it, and his successors, one after another, had jealously retained it. This title connected the Cæsar most closely with the established creed of the Empire; it gave him control over the ritual of the national religion, and power over the introduction of foreign cults. Accordingly Gratian, Christian though he professed himself, was at the same time Supreme Pontiff of the Pagans, and still inscribed the title upon his coins, as his Christian predecessors had all done before him. But the Senate conceived the idea of utilising his acceptance of this prerogative for their own objects. They aimed at making the Pagan character of the sovereign conspicuous and unmistakable; at insisting

on the reality of what men were disposed to treat quietly as a guileless fiction. A robe, preserved with special care in the Capitol, was, it seems, the outward symbol of this supreme pontificate. The College of Priests, under the direction of the Senate, brought forth this venerable vestment, and bore it pompously into Gaul, where Gratian chanced to be then sojourning. Ambrose, it seems, always a confidential favourite, was then in attendance upon the Emperor, and being consulted by him, declared that the time had come for him to perform the duty in which his august forerunners had hitherto failed. Gratian, at the prompting of the Christian prelate, refuses to accept the proffered robe. This, says he, is a decoration altogether unbecoming to a Christian man. The Pontiffs are struck with consternation. Their cunning device has been baffled. The Emperor has pronounced, more unequivocally than ever, for the new faith and against the old. A great crisis in the spiritual history of man is evidently at hand. Nevertheless the victory is not yet complete, possibly not yet assured. The time-honoured compromise between the two parties must still for a time endure. Gratian, who has refused the robe, allows himself notwithstanding to flourish the title

which it betokens. In his official acts, upon his medals, he is still qualified as Pontifex Maximus; in the same spirit perhaps as our Henry VIII. clutched the title of Defender of the Faith after he had rejected the Faith, at least the outward form of faith which he had originally undertaken to defend. If any one had contested Henry's claim to this title, he would have surely suffered for it; and if any one had complained of the similar inconsistency in the conduct of Gratian he would have fallen, amid general acclamation, under the sentence of Imperial law. So illogical can we be when it suits us, both ancients and moderns! Yet we may recognise in this trivial matter the hand of a disposing Providence. It was well for the growth of Christianity at this crisis that neither at Rome nor at Milan should the Bishop yet have room to thrust himself into the place of sovereign Pontiff or supreme director of men's consciences. Rightly or wrongly the title was still occupied by the secular power, which would not yet suffer itself to be called in question by a mere spiritual priesthood.

Meanwhile political events were working in favour of the Christians. Gratian fell indeed in a mutiny headed by one of his officers; but whatever

had been Ambrose's influence with Gratian it was redoubled when he became the adviser of Gratian's brother, the younger Valentinian. The moment was critical. The usurper's name was Maximus. This man called himself a Pagan, at least the Pagans rested their hopes on him. While the blow which he eventually struck was still suspended, one of the priests whom Gratian had disappointed was heard to mutter: 'If Gratian will not be Pontifex Maximus, Maximus will soon be pontifex.' When Gratian fell the Pagan historian declares that he was justly punished for the affront he had put upon ministers of the ancient religion. The usurper, it was anticipated, would lay the lesson to heart. The position of Ambrose was now doubtless a difficult one. Maximus seems to have been disposed to treat him, as well as his party generally, with forbearance. He did not care to raise up for himself more enemies. Ambrose, for his part, was not unwilling to acquiesce in the course which worldly prudence dictated. He refrained from irritating the tyrant, who could be himself so forbearing. Perhaps it was through the Bishop's counsels and complacent attitude that Maximus was led to content himself with the command of the army, and to allow the Imperial province

of Italy to retain its fidelity to Gratian's younger brother, mere stripling though he was. If it was the courtly prelate who protected Valentinian and preserved the title of Emperor for him, Ambrose gained his reward in the unbounded authority he was shortly enabled to exercise over him.

Doubtless the Pagan party at Rome regarded the success of Maximus as an encouragement to their own views. They proceeded promptly to draw from it all the advantage which it presented to them. Most honoured among their leaders was the illustrious orator Symmachus, a decided Pagan, the pupil and inheritor of the fame of the not less illustrious Libanius, who had been Julian's chief adviser. By counsel of this personage, who was holding high office in the ancient capital, they determined to demand of the Imperial infant, not the assumption of the pontifical vestment, but the restoration of the statue of Victory itself. They sent a deputation to Milan with this object, placing Symmachus as their spokesman at its head. They were dismayed perhaps at finding that the timid child, whom they hoped to overawe, had already thrown himself into the arms of Ambrose, and had allowed the Bishop to arrange for a personal disputa-

tion on the matter in hand, in which Symmachus should first urge his demand, and Ambrose confront it with a formal reply. And so the battle of the old faith and the new was openly fought and won in a memorable encounter.

The Christian party, which gained the victory, could afford to publish the arguments on either side; and so it happens that we possess at this day the actual manifestoes put forth by the rival creeds each in face of the other.

Kings and courts have listened in later times to the word-fence of polemical disputants, and theological students have followed with interest, and sometimes with profit, the recorded arguments of earnest combatants, fighting for their faith and hope, their honour, and perhaps even their lives. It must be confessed, however, that on the occasion before us, the first I suppose of its kind, neither of the orators showed himself equal to the duty imposed upon him. Each of them plainly sought the victory rather than the truth. Each was content to use just the weapons which he deemed most effective for his immediate object. Each appeared at the bar as an advocate, and rhetoric in those days was easily accepted for counsel or for persuasion. Perhaps it

may be said that neither the creed of the Pagan nor the creed of the Christian admitted of such methods of reasoning as would convince the other. Even if the Pagan could have produced any plausible evidence for his auguries, his visions, and his miracles, the Christian might have afforded to admit it liberally, while he alleged, on his part, that such marvels might be the work not of the true God only, but also of demons. Had the Christian appealed to the supernatural in Scripture, the Pagan might of course have made a similar reply. Against the fulfilled prophecies of Holy Writ he would have set the pretended authority of the Sibyls and the Oracles, which had deceived even Christians themselves. Such arguments were in fact tacitly relinquished on both sides. The contest did actually resolve itself mainly into the assertion by the Pagan speaker of the protection which the Olympian deities had ever accorded to the Roman State, culminating in an earnest and touching appeal to the claim of a venerable antiquity and the common consent of immemorial wisdom and experience. But both of these propositions Ambrose meets and easily refutes, showing that the gods had abandoned Rome on many critical occasions, and were even then aban-

doning her, while the plea of antiquity was refuted by the notorious habit of the Romans of admitting novel divinities and novel usages to the same honours with the old. The Christian had doubtless the best of the argument, such as it was; but we cannot fail to be much disappointed at the inconclusive reasoning which prevailed almost throughout so solemn a debate. Strange it must seem to us that the defender of our Faith at such a crisis should make no reference to the moral bearings of the question, no appeal to the practical results of a living creed in purifying the heart, in instilling principles of justice, honesty, and fortitude, nor to the spiritual efficacy of the Gospel in lifting men above the world, and creating them anew in the likeness of the Holy One. No; the argument of the sainted Bishop is of the earth, earthy. Indeed the ease with which he gains so complete a victory with such weapons as he deigns to use is perhaps the most significant point in the whole discussion.

We may reflect, however, that after all, every age has its own trials in religious belief, and every age provides its own way of meeting them. The attacks upon the Christian faith, and the defences opposed to them, vary, as we know, from one genera-

tion to another. It is only a few palmary arguments on either side that retain their force from one generation to another. The attacks of Voltaire and the defence of Paley have both lost much of the repute in which they were held in the last century; and we must not allow ourselves to disparage overmuch the reasoning of a Symmachus and an Ambrose, or think that, because they have little value for us, they did not touch the heart of the audience which the speakers undertook in their turn to influence. Let us not refuse all sympathy with the spiritual yearnings of the last assertor of a worn-out creed, nor withhold our admiration from the bold though somewhat loose declamation of the Christian orator, to whose zeal the intellectual triumph of our Faith is perhaps mainly owing. Ambrose, as may be supposed, was judged to be the better reasoner of the two; the statue of Victory was not restored to the Pagans; and from that time, we may go on to remark, Victory herself, that 'winged thing,' as the poet calls her,[1] never again settled on their standards; the momentary shadow of a reaction in their favour, under

[1] Keats (*Hyperion*, ii. 341), imagining a parallel contest between the old gods of classical mythology and the new:

> 'That was before we knew the winged thing,
> Victory, might be lost, or might be won.'

Eugenius, some years later, does not deserve our consideration. The gains of the Pagan misbelief upon the doctrine and practice of the Christians have been and still perhaps are more insidious.

This was the first great victory of Ambrose. It was the triumph of the champion of Christianity, with which his illustrious name must ever be associated; but, in fact, it was the cause which triumphed rather than the man. The time was ripe for it, and almost any disputant of high position and admitted ability might doubtless have gained the same success on the same arena. If Ambrose owes to it his title of Saint, the Church of Christ owes to it, by God's providence, her historical position as the spiritual ruler of nations. The time was come when the Church might say to her adversaries, so long her persecutors: 'You have hitherto been the strongest, but I am the stronger now. Up, and quit your place, and there let me seat myself! You never hearkened to my pleas; little heed will I now take of yours, except it be to deride and trifle with them.'

So far the Church showed herself imperious, perhaps arrogant, but the spirit of ecclesiastical intolerance was now beginning to arise. True, that when the secular power punished the heretic Priscillian

for disloyalty or, it may be, for immorality rather than for dogmatic error, Ambrose could express himself grieved and shocked. Nevertheless, while Paganism was still too strong to have her temples closed and her rites forbidden, he did not scruple to set the fatal example of maltreating the Jews, in supporting an impetuous prelate who had allowed a synagogue to be burnt, and forbidding it to be rebuilt. 'This is not a matter of police and social right,' he said; 'there is a religious principle involved in it. Religion must be paramount.' From that day commenced the long and frightful series of Jewish wrongs throughout Christendom. Can anything be more awful? On such a point one cannot speak without emotion; nor would I disguise the satisfaction I cannot but feel at the cowardice this bold oppressor himself betrays when it is his cue to flatter the new usurper Arbogastes, who had murdered his patron Valentinian. Ambrose has occasion to pronounce the young prince's funeral oration. Many fine things he says, perhaps not unjustly, of the hapless victim; but when he is obliged at last to make some allusion to the foul deed by which he fell, the Bishop turns courtier, and is content to intimate that politics are beyond his sphere; his

language, he declares, is the accent of sorrow, not of accusation. 'Jesus Christ Himself in dying cursed not His enemies, but prayed for them!' So was the Church of Christ put to its first trial as a State-Church, and it fell! Such, again, is the strain of priestly courtliness which in later times and other countries, and notably in Catholic France under her Catholic kings, has attained its evil notoriety.

But Ambrose was allowed to gain a second victory, a more difficult, and so far a greater victory than the first. This later triumph was gained indeed in the cause of the Church rather than of the Faith itself. By one bold and resolute stroke he shifted the position of the Church from that of a handmaid of the secular ruler to that of his spiritual controller. Such at least was the claim he tacitly advanced, and deep is the mark it has made on the history of Christendom ever since, wide the recognition it has received among Christian communities even to the present day. The Papal Syllabus, of which we have heard so much in recent times, may pretend to be the legitimate descendant of the rebuke inflicted by Ambrose upon the Emperor Theodosius.

This illustrious prince, himself a great captain and the son of the greatest captain of his day, had

been called by the Western Emperor Gratian to the throne of Constantinople, and had saved the Eastern Empire from an invasion of the Goths. He was regarded as the saviour of society; still more he was regarded by the orthodox party in the Church, which was now regaining its ascendancy, as the protector of the true Faith. He was reputed to be an earnest believer, and we need not question that he actually was so. At a later period, when he was enabled to unite the two Empires under one sceptre, he had the courage to issue edicts for the closing of the Pagan temples and the abolition of their services,—edicts loudly proclaimed indeed, but still only partially and occasionally enforced. But great, and brave, and pious as we may hope he was, a deep stain attached to his character from the massacre he allowed himself to commit at Thessalonica, when he brutally avenged a popular sedition by putting to the sword seven thousand of its inhabitants. The great Christian Emperor repeated the frightful crime of the monster Caracalla, at which all Pagandom had shuddered, at Alexandria. We may well believe that the Christians, with all their admiration for their august patron, were sincerely shocked at it, and resented the advantage such a scandal would give

to the heretics and unbelievers. It would be a grand stroke of policy, they might think, if any one among them would bravely denounce it before the world, and demonstrate to the Empire, Pagan as well as Christian, that the faith of Christ is everywhere and at all times a living moral power.

This was the step which Ambrose, no doubt with more than ordinary courage, determined to take. He addressed the guilty tyrant with a letter: 'You have sinned,' he wrote, 'as David did. Can you hesitate to do what David did afterwards? You have imitated him in his crime; now is the time to emulate him in his penitence. Devoted as I am to your majesty in all other matters, this, at least, I am constrained to declare, that I could not offer in your presence the Holy Sacrifice! I could not do so after the spilling of one innocent man's blood. How then could I do so after your spilling the blood of such a multitude?'

To this address Theodosius, it seems, makes no reply, but on his return to Milan goes without demur to the cathedral. The Bishop meets him at the portal, and, in the name of the Most High, forbids him to enter. For a moment the Emperor hesitates, and essays to parley; but the prelate holds his

ground firmly, and he desists and withdraws. It is not till after a penitence of eight months' duration that Ambrose suffers him to present himself in the church of the Lord Jesus.

The story is simple and touching. The greatest arts—painting, poetry, sculpture—have all, it has been said, assisted the Muse of History in colouring it to the imagination, and impressing it upon the heart of later generations. The Church felt at the moment that it was especially in her interest that the gallant deed was done, and the Church in general, but the Church of Rome more particularly, has drawn, it must be confessed, some audacious corollaries from it. The name of the holy Ambrose has been constantly made use of as a battle-cry against the civil power. If his example has sometimes encouraged churchmen to brave and noble efforts in resistance to secular tyranny, it has too often served, and in no less degree, to screen the encroachments of ambition, of violence, and of personal rancour; too often even good princes have had to curse both the arrogance of Ambrose and the submissiveness of Theodosius. It has been remarked that Pope Innocent IV. thus cited the example of Theodosius to the devout Saint Louis, the eldest son of the

Church, and at the same time to his excommunicated opponent, the second Frederic of Germany. It was precisely in the spirit of Ambrose that the Patriarch of Jerusalem had laid an interdict on the church which this wilful prince had dared to enter. There can be no doubt that the famous exploit of the Bishop of Milan sowed the seed of that spiritual arrogance which, issuing forth here and there in many lands and in divers ages, has fructified in the organised assumptions of the Church of Rome, and so strongly coloured the history of mediæval and modern Europe. These assumptions have been encountered, as we know, by the indignant resistance of princes and peoples, so as to give to the general course of Christian progress the appearance of a continual struggle; so as to set the secular interests of human nature in constant opposition to the spiritual claims upon them, to exasperate the temper of both the rival claimants, to persuade the laity that the Church has no just authority, the churchmen that its authority has no limits. Possibly, if Ambrose had foreseen the superstructure of priestly aggression which has been raised on the foundation he thus blindly laid, he might have modified an act which was destined to produce such questionable results; which has set in many

minds the idea of the Church and of reconciliation with the Church, before that of God and of reconciliation with God; and has recommended formalism and unreality to the men of formal and unreal character who have never failed to abound among us. Nevertheless, let us not deny his just title to our admiration for his noble spirit and loyalty to the faith he preached. Let us not grudge him the glory he has acquired throughout Christendom for the ideal of Christian order which he was the first to blazon to the world. Doubtless it was well that the first signal act of authority on the part of the Christian ministry, on its attaining a public position, should be directed, not against the obscure failings of private individuals, but against the notorious crime of the secular governor. The attention of all mankind was thus drawn at once to the new principles which laid claim to their devout veneration, and from henceforth Christianity could not fail to command their awe and sway their fears and aspirations.

We must remark, indeed, some inconsistency in the timidity with which the same monitor who had rebuked the sin of Theodosius shrank from any reflection, as we have seen, upon that of Arbogastes, the murderer of Valentinian. Some critics, contrasting

his attitude in the one case and in the other, have ventured to insinuate that he must have received a previous assurance that the Emperor would not resent his boldness; the striking scene between them was no more, they imagine, than a theatrical performance arranged for some common object. But this far-fetched supposition does not commend itself to any serious attention. It might be enough perhaps to reply that after all Theodosius was known to be a civilised man, a religious man, and a Christian believer, whereas Arbogastes was a barbarian, of no religion at all. It might be easier to be firm and even bold with the one than with the the other. But we cannot enter further into circumstances of which we have no real knowledge. Historical conjecture or divination may be the *forte* of a Tacitus or a Niebuhr; but it is the foible of too many lesser historians. Let us be content, then, with what we do know, and remember that Theodosius is a prominent character in Roman and Christian history, who has not failed to leave distinct traces of his own individuality, and at the same time to throw light upon the temper of his contemporaries and of the age in which they lived.

Ambrose, it may be presumed, was well aware

that this great captain and administrator was a man of strong character, and resolute in carrying out the views on which his mind was fixed. He knew that Theodosius was not only a Christian on conviction, but a believer who accepted the Church as the interpreter of the Christian Scriptures, and based the authority of the Church upon primitive traditions. These were his vouchers for the orthodox or Athanasian theology; and he presented himself accordingly to the Christian world as the champion of the Trinitarian against the Arian section of believers, which had been during the last half century pretty equally balanced. Zealous himself in vindication of the orthodox theory, he was disposed to regard the great divines who maintained it with especial veneration; to esteem them highly for their work's sake, as divinely appointed defenders of the Faith; to invest their language and acts with the character of a Divine revelation. We may well believe that such an enthusiast would see in the bold rebuke of the Bishop of Milan a dispensation from on High, and feel himself honoured rather than humiliated by so special an intervention of the Head of the Church to which he had devoted himself. He withdrew, I would say, elated rather than abashed from the door

which was closed so rudely in his face; he underwent his penance of eight months' exclusion apparently without a murmur; he continued throughout to regard the minister of Divine justice with awe and unfailing obedience; he persevered in the policy on which he had already entered, of discrediting and repressing, though not without hesitation and reserve, the manifestations of Paganism throughout the Empire.[1]

There is a consideration which deserves to be

[1] Bungener, *Séances Historiques à Genève*, 1858, page 190. 'En louant magnifiquement le zèle de Théodose Ambroise entendait moins le remercier de ce qu'il avait fait, que le pousser à faire davantage. Le nom de Théodose n'en a pas moins été invoqué depuis, toutes les fois qu'il s'est agi de louer des persécuteurs ou de pousser à la persécution; ses lois contre les païens ont fait verser des torrents de sang dans l'église. Ce n'était pas assez du Théodose de l'histoire; on a fait un Théodose idéal, plus absolu, plus cruel que ne fut jamais le véritable, et c'est celui-là que Rome a proposé toutes les fois qu'elle le pouvait ou l'osait, à l'imitation des souverains. Nulle différence, sur ce point, entre la Rome ultramontaine et la Rome d'autre pays. Quand Innocent III. pousse à l'extermination des Albigeois,—Théodose, Théodose! Quand les évêques d'Angleterre poussent Henri VIII. Catholique à l'extermination des Luthériens du pays,—Théodose, Théodose! Quand Léon X. pousse François I. à l'extermination des Luthériens en France,—Théodose! Quand Bossuet, enfin, célèbre Louis XIV.—Théodose, Théodose! . . . Et c'est pour mériter ce titre que le nouveau Théodose poursuivra impitoyablement son œuvre, plus dur et de beaucoup, contre les malheureux chrétiens, que ne fut l'autre jadis, contre les païens et le paganisme. Rome excelle à tirer parti d'un nom pour établir ou amplifier un principe.'

borne in mind when we read of the suppression of the Pagan rites and the services of the temples. The endowments of the temples throughout the Empire, numerous and wealthy as they were, had been for the most part assigned to individuals charged with defraying the necessary expenses. So far these endowments were similar in principle to those which have been commonly provided throughout Christendom for the ministers of the Christian churches. But in Christian lands these ministers form a class apart, a profession which has generally been but slenderly provided with private means, and which accordingly has exercised little influence in State affairs, except in the case of mediæval bishops and abbots. In the Pagan Empire the case was very different. There it was the nobles and great secular personages who enjoyed for the most part the funds appropriated to religious objects. There existed no clerical profession of religious teachers; but certain families, in many cases the most powerful of the governing class, were often the hereditary guardians of certain temples. They were especially charged by law, or a common understanding derived from ancient tradition, with the maintenance of special services, not for the spiritual benefit of individual

worshippers, but in the interest of the public and for the safety of the commonwealth. Now it is one thing to disendow a class, such as the modern clergy, for the most part poor and humble, and of little secular repute, and quite another to carry out such a process against a large and powerful body of high families, and the most distinguished personages in the realm. It seems clear that, as might indeed be expected, the earliest edicts for the confiscation of the temple-endowments under Gratian, big and stern as they look in the codes or statute-book, were practically of little effect. If many temples were really closed, as we may readily believe, though certainly by no means all or the greater number of them, we must suppose that the lordly holders of their property contrived to retain the enjoyment of the funds, while they, not unwillingly perhaps, relieved themselves from the services for which these funds had been originally given. Theodosius found the Pagan priesthood despoiled of their wealth in name only, and however earnest he might be in his Christian profession, he long abstained, both in policy and mercy, from asserting the full authority of previous enactments. He prudently made a distinction between the property attached to the temples and that

which was appropriated to the maintenance of the popular games and shows. If he allowed the first to be sacrificed, he withdrew the latter more gradually and partially. The ministers of the temples could be propitiated by the share of the spoil which he suffered to fall to their lot. The Emperor took himself, like our King Henry, a large part of these estates, a part he devoted to the maintenance of his soldiers, another he gave or sold to friends and flatterers. Means are not wanting for facilitating the work of disendowing the most powerful corporations and interests, such as have been found more than once in our own history, and may be brought into operation again. The Pagan orator Libanius has certified, like our pious Spelman, to such as are disposed to credit the phenomenon, that all those who allowed themselves to profit by sacrilege under the earlier edict of Constantius, perished miserably. Nevertheless, it would seem that the Pagans themselves were not deterred from seeking their personal emolument by the later confiscations of Gratian and Theodosius. It is remarkable that the priesthoods of the Pagan superstitions, the old observance, as it came now to be commonly called, though despoiled of their endowments, did not quickly cease to be objects of attraction, and especi-

ally, it is said, in the provinces. They still conferred, it would seem, some social distinction, which repaid the expenses which were imposed upon them, and tempted, strange to say, even Christians to solicit them. The Emperor thundered against this scandal, yet even Christians were known to evade his decrees by apostatising from the Faith. Theodosius replied by pronouncing such wretches legally infamous. Still encouraged and urged forward by the dominant party, he narrowed more and more the limits of Pagan liberty, and finally decreed the penalty of death for the performance of any act of Pagan sacrifice. The execution of the law might still be imperfect, but its animus was held to be satisfactory. Both Constantine and Theodosius may be raised in history to heroic proportions, but it was not for their secular so much as for their ecclesiastical achievements that they were hailed with the illustrious title of the Great.

The Imperial legislation on the subject of the Pagan superstitions, from Gratian to Honorius—so much of it at least as has been collected together in the Corpus of the Roman Law before Justinian—is contained in the tenth title or chapter of the Sixteenth Book. The progress which Theodosius made

in accomplishing the object of suppressing idolatry may there be traced step by step. It culminated, as far as these documents show, in the decree of the year 392 just mentioned. It has been asserted, indeed, that this pious prince took a still further stride in the same direction in commanding the actual overthrow of the Pagan temples. But no such law can be traced in our records, and it seems more probable that it was pretended only, as an excuse for the irregular violence which was exercised in divers places against the most conspicuous monuments of the proscribed faith. The images of the gods shared the fate of their shrines. 'The colossal statue of Serapis,' says Gibbon, in a well-known passage of his 'History,' 'was involved in the ruin of his temple and religion. . . . It was confidently affirmed that, if any impious hand should dare to violate the majesty of the god, the heavens and the earth would instantly return to their original chaos. An intrepid soldier, animated by zeal and armed with a weighty battle-axe, ascended the ladder; and even the Christian multitude expected with some anxiety the event of the combat. He aimed a vigorous stroke against the cheek of Serapis; the cheek fell to the ground; the thunder was silent,

and both the heavens and the earth continued to preserve their accustomed order and tranquillity. The victorious soldier repeated his blows; the huge idol was overthrown and broken in pieces, and the limbs of Serapis were ignominiously dragged through the streets of Alexandria. His mangled carcase was burnt in the amphitheatre, amidst the shouts of the populace; and many persons attributed their conversion to this discovery of the impotence of their tutelar deity. . . . After the fall of Serapis some hopes were still entertained by the Pagans that the Nile would refuse his annual supply to the impious masters of Egypt, . . . but the delay was soon compensated by the rapid swell of the waters.'

This striking incident was repeated no doubt with the same effect in hundreds of instances throughout the world-wide Empire, though still more frequently in the East than in the West. In Gaul and Spain, in Italy, and at Rome itself, the ancient local traditions lingered more persistently, and popular opinion was generally too strong for the law, and even for the zeal of the triumphant votaries of the new faith. But by the grace of Providence at the overthrow of the Pagan institutions, a fresh, a vigorous, and a true belief was already widely dis-

seminated, and was prepared to take their place, and receive into its bosom the dismayed devotees of the fallen superstitions. The multitude, on ceasing to be Pagan, became readily Christian, in name at least and outward usage. The disendowment of the temples was compensated by the endowment of the churches. The temples themselves were in numerous instances transformed, with little change in their fabrics or decorations, into churches, and the revenues which had been appropriated to them by the munificence of past generations were, if not already alienated, not unfrequently transferred to their successors. The piety of liberal churchmen was stimulated to complete the requisite dotation; the devotion of tithes to God's service was encouraged, and urged as an act of piety. All classes vied with each other in pouring their wealth into the Church as the general depository of the public alms and thank-offerings. From the era of St. Ambrose, who together with his patron passed away before the close of this century of religious revolution, dates the final settlement of our Faith throughout the Empire as the acknowledged director of the human conscience. As the old religion of Pagan Rome had been esteemed the guardian and pledge of the fortunes of the com-

monwealth, so was it now and henceforth with the new religion derived from Christ and his Apostles. Such was the union of Church and State, cemented by the popular imagination rather than by any formal and technical procedure. Enough that the Emperor, the ruler of the State, was henceforth a Christian by profession; that all his public and private acts were sanctified by Christian devotions; that he convened, and directed in his own person, the councils of Christian divines for the decision of theological questions; that in many cases he appointed the chief prelates of the Christian community; that the rank and revenues of bishops and priests were secured to them by the law of the Empire, while the ministers of every false religion were impoverished and degraded; that the laws and institutions of the State were gradually, and at least partially, conformed to the prescriptions of Christian morality. The legislation of Church and State, thus combined and mutually influencing one another, carried on more efficiently the humaner principles which had already broken the hard crust of the ancient jurisprudence. Some immunities and securities were granted to the unfortunate class of slaves, with whose bondage the antique world, neither Pagan nor

Christian, could dispense. The use of torture was abolished or limited. The cruel combats of the gladiators were discouraged at least by the awakened Christian conscience, even before they were finally suppressed by Christian law. But the most marked advance in Christian sentiment was manifested, first, in the universal diffusion of religious and moral teaching in churches planted in every town and village, and again in the respect paid to women, and to pureness of living in either sex. The Church and State were thus practically united; they lived and moved in harmony together. God Himself, to all human appearance, had joined them together; the compact, it might well be supposed, was complete and enduring, and no one henceforth should put it asunder. It should be added that, with her prosperity the Church recovered the primitive spirit of toleration, which in her recent struggles she was on the point of losing. Paganism, defeated and discredited, was allowed to die out from its own falsehood,—and it continued dying for some centuries at least,—perhaps, in some sense, it is not yet dead altogether in the midst of us.

LECTURE II.

ST. AUGUSTINE: SOME LESSONS FROM HIS LIFE AND TEACHING.

I HAVE already chosen St. Ambrose for the central figure of my sketch of the outward, the objective, the visible Church of the century which followed upon the conversion of Constantine. It was desirable for the purpose of these elementary Lectures on our early ecclesiastical history to take another similar figure to represent the leading characteristics of the inner life of the Church, its religious views and sentiments, during nearly the same important period. For this object no more suitable personage presents himself than he who is regarded by common consent as the greatest of the Christian Fathers, the most illustrious, I may perhaps say, of all Christian thinkers, the most learned, for his time the most enlightened, let me add, the most spiritually minded of the early Church, St. Augustine.

As Bishop of an obscure diocese in Africa, far

removed from Rome or Constantinople, this eminent divine could not appeal effectually to the hearts of men from the circumstance of his mere outward position. His vast influence was altogether personal with his own generation, and such it has continued with all that have followed. It was gained, and it has been ever since largely maintained, by the universality of his learning, the prodigious activity with which he circulated his views of faith and practice, the constancy with which he defended the Catholic doctrines, the energy with which he repelled the attacks of heretics and unbelievers, the subtilty, we may add, with which he contrived to enlist the philosophic views of morality in the cause of the Gospel. In an age of abundant theological science Augustine was something more than a theologian; in an age of superabundant theological pedantry he was less than any divine of his own day—than most of any day—a pedant. We may almost regard it as specially providential that the early career by which a character so signal was developed should be preserved to us in full detail in the remarkable work by which Augustine is still most popularly known, the 'Confessions,' which constitute his moral autobiography.

It is from this book that we derive, in the first

place, almost all that we know of the writer's personal history, and with this his mental and spiritual growth are so closely connected that we may carry on our review of the two pretty nearly together.

We begin by marking the date of Augustine's birth in the year 353, about ten years later than that of Ambrose, about forty years after the first recognition of Christianity by Constantine. His birthplace was Tagaste, a small town in Numidia; his parents were of humble origin. The Christian population of the district derived their culture from Carthage, the third and almost the second city of the Empire,[1] abounding at the time in schools of every kind of learning, and the home of many diverse sects of philosophical opinion; but there was no region in which the Gospel had made more progress than that which had been illustrated by the virtues of Cyprian, as well as by the genius of Tertullian. For some centuries Northern Africa, the modern Tunis and Algeria, the paradise of the Pax Romana, was perhaps the most favoured portion of the world

[1] Ausonius, after placing Rome first, says of this city,

'Constantinopoli assurgit Carthago priori,
Non toto cessura gradu, quia tertia dici
Fastidit, non ausa locum sperare secundum,
Qui fuit ambarum.'

in wealth and tranquillity; the birth of Augustine at Tagaste took place many years before this happy epoch had begun to be overclouded by the threat of invasion from the North.

Patricius, Augustine's father, was, it seems, originally a Pagan, a man of indifferent character and of no personal distinction. The future Saint inherited all the better part of his own nature from his mother, Monica, illustrious as the first example in Christian history, if we except the Eunice of St. Paul's Epistle, of the blessed influence of the mother in moulding the character of the beloved offspring to the highest Christian model. Few figures of the ancient Church seem more familiar to us than that of the pious mother of Augustine; and it deserves our regard and veneration as the Gospel type of female virtue, which bears in itself a touching testimony to the truth of the Christian revelation. Monica is said to have converted her husband in his later years, and thus to have secured the privilege of devoting herself to imbuing their child with her own religious aspirations. She gave the young Augustine his first lessons in Christian obedience, and taught him to look to her with devotion and confidence as a blessed example of the effects of a Christian confession; but it was not

imperative to bring the infant, or even the young child, to the font, and enrol him in his tender years under the sign or banner of the Cross. Augustine had reached the stage of early manhood, and he was not yet baptized. Leaving his early home, after the death of his father, he carried with him, as he tells us, merely some vague ideas of the faith of the Christian disciples; he retained in his soul no more than an echo of the name of Christ, which he had heard so often uttered by his mother's lips, but an echo which continued to vibrate ever and anon through the many years of doubt and perplexity which were to elapse before he became himself, by the grace of God and through his mother's prayers, not almost but altogether a Christian.

The 'Confessions of St. Augustine' present us with a signal instance of the self-conscious, self-accusing, self-tormenting spirit which breathes, through all ages, in the autobiographical records of converts to a vital faith. We are well aware how often this spirit is exaggerated and perverted, and how little reliance can be placed even on the particular details upon which it delights to expatiate. Such a spirit is indeed rather a matter of temperament than of reason and reflection, and while it merits our tender

and even reverential regard, we must ever guard against the interest which it is only too well calculated to inspire. We remember, not without an awful sense of the self-humiliation which such repentance should engender, how the holy Apostle declared of himself that he was 'the chief of sinners.' We must not be surprised then to hear the vehement self-reproaches of Augustine when he refers again and again to the failings of his own conduct in the early years which he lays open to us. Certainly, we have no reason to doubt that, as he piteously declares, he showed himself in unthinking youth a careless libertine. Doubtless he yielded, as he persists in declaring, to the violent passions so common to the early years of which he speaks, surrounded as they were in his case with more than common temptations. The African Paganism which he witnessed about him, and from which he was not sheltered by the training and discipline of the Christian Church, partook of the dissoluteness of Asia and Syria, from whence it sprung. He was surrounded by the worship of nature, of the elemental deities which represented and pretended to glorify the natural appetites; by the worship of Belus and Astarte, which had long lost among the vulgar herd of their votaries what-

ever spiritual sense might have been once attached to it by heads and hearts of the better kind. Augustine confesses that he was led away by carnal weakness; he stooped to sins of impurity; he contracted at a very early age an illicit sexual connexion; but even that sinful self-surrender may have protected him from a career of vulgar debauchery; for of none such does he accuse himself, as he surely would have done without disguise if his conscience had witnessed against him. No—we may be sure that our holy Father was not a man to yield to the grosser forms of sin; and from the first he strove against his temptations by devoting himself to study, to the acquisition of knowledge, to the full employment of his mind and ever-active imagination. He still longs for the food meet for his soul. He yearns for wisdom; but as yet it is the wisdom of this world only which he seeks in divers studies, but especially in the study of rhetoric, which was the passport then, as since, to worldly distinctions of many kinds. Nevertheless, professor of rhetoric though he has become, he is still unsatisfied. He now sighs for *belief;* he requires a creed on which to stay himself. He looks about him; he feels about him restlessly; but he has not learnt to fix his mind on any one

thing with sufficient steadiness. He is disappointed; as all half-seekers after a creed will surely be, and disappointment in his fervid nature soon turns to impatience, impatience to despair. And then he plunges into worldly amusements to relieve the void in his spiritual aspirations. He frequents the theatre and the circus, which in those days could only furnish fresh fuel for the passions. But his nature is too good to be thus satisfied. On the contrary, he shrinks with genuine horror from the moral intoxication of the shows, of which he has given us a notable account in the case of a companion who had like himself experienced it.

He is speaking of his very intimate friend Alypius, who occupies a large part of the story of his early life, its yearnings and its struggles. This young man, he tells us, had gone before him to study law at Rome, and was there carried away with excessive eagerness to the combats of the gladiators. 'For,' to quote the Confessions, 'being utterly averse from, and detesting such spectacles, he met one day by chance certain of his acquaintance and fellow-students coming from dinner, and they with a familiar violence haled him, refusing and resisting, into the amphitheatre, during the progress of those

deadly entertainments. Again and again did he protest, "Though you drag my body there, and there set me down, you cannot force me to turn eyes or mind upon those horrors. I shall then be absent even while I am present, and so shall overcome both you and them." They, hearing this, bore him on nevertheless, desirous perhaps to try that very thing, whether he could do as he pretended. When they had arrived and had taken their places as they could, the whole place kindled with the savage pastime. But he, closing the passages of his eyes, forbade his mind to range abroad,—and would that he had stopped his ears also! For in the fight when one fell, a mighty cry of the whole people striking him strongly, overcome by curiosity, and prepared as it were to despise and rise superior to the scene whatever it might be, even when disclosed to him, he opened his eyes, and was at once stricken with a deeper wound in his soul than was the other in his body, and he fell more miserably than he on whose fall that mighty noise was raised. . . . For as soon as he saw that blood he therewith drank in savageness, nor turned he away, but fixed his eyes upon it, frenzied unawares, and was delighted with the wicked fight, intoxicated with the bloody pastime. Why say

more? He beheld, he shouted, he caught fire; he carried thence with him the madness which should goad him to return, not with them only who had first drawn him thither, but even before them,—yea, and to draw in others.' How evidently genuine a narrative! How true to our common nature! Have we not read precisely like accounts of the experience of countrymen of our own who have been enticed to witness the scenes of a Spanish bull-fight? How much might we learn of the manners, the thoughts, the hearts of antiquity, and how like they were to our own in all their diversity, had the Fathers indulged us with a few more such simple narratives! How many of their sermons might we have spared for them! And, lastly, have we not all felt more or less of this common human infirmity in the experience of our own early days at college or elsewhere? Do we not begin to realize that Alypius was one of ourselves, that the great Augustine himself was after all one of ourselves also?

Perhaps this common likeness may be brought even more home to us by another anecdote taken from these candid Confessions. The writer is still speaking of the sins of his early youth, his sins of impurity, but still more of carelessness and vanity:

'And in all,' he exclaims solemnly, 'was a mist intercepting from me, O God, the brightness of Thy Truth; and mine iniquity burst out from very fulness.' And he goes on to make a more special disclosure. 'Theft,' he says, 'is punished by Thy Law, O Lord, and the Law written in men's hearts, which iniquity doth not efface. . . . Yet I lusted after theft, and I thieved, not compelled by hunger or poverty; for I stole that of which I had enough and much better. Nor cared I to enjoy that which I stole, but took pleasure in the theft for the very sin's sake, and that only. A pear-tree there was hard by our vineyard, laden with fruit, tempting neither for colour nor taste. To shake this and rob it, some lewd fellows among us went late one night, and took huge loads, not for eating, but to fling to the very hogs after merely tasting them. And this out of mere wantonness—to do what we lusted to do, just because it was wrong to do it. Behold my heart, O God,—behold my heart which Thou hadst pity upon in the bottomless pit! Foul was the deed, and I loved it; I loved to perish;—I loved mine own fault, not seeking aught through shame, but simply the very shame itself.' Some of my hearers may remember to have read in a book now almost for-

gotten, and not undeservedly so—Richard Froude's 'Remains'—how bitterly he accuses himself, and in a strain how like to this, of having eaten a bit of roast goose on some occasion when he fancies he should not have so indulged himself. Such scrupulosity in matters so trivial is common enough among us, and generally indicates not a sound but a weakly conscience. It forms the staple of many tender-hearted confessions of men who have never risen above it; but in Augustine it was combined with, and eventually overruled by a stronger will and a juster appreciation of the whole duty of Man. In another man it would have been little worthy of our attention.

But the course of our Saint's autobiography requires me to refer to other charges which he makes against himself, still of a trifling and what we may surely call a venial character; and we can only regret that, if they were worth recording at all, he should paint them in colours so flagrant. Thus he cries and groans again, still speaking of his youthful errors:—'Stage plays also carried me away, full of images of my own miseries and of fuel for my fire.' Not that he is denouncing the theatre as the hotbed, as it then really was, of heathenism or licentiousness,

but simply as pampering the imagination. 'Why is it,' he asks, 'that man desires to be made sad, beholding things doleful and tragical, which yet he would by no means wish himself to suffer? Yet he desires to feel sorrow at them as a spectator only. This he makes his pleasure; but what is this but a wretched madness? For when he suffers in his own person, then indeed he calls it pain and sorrow; but when he compassionates others, then forsooth it is pity or mercy. And what sort of compassion is this for feigned and scenic sufferings, when the hearer is not asked to relieve but to grieve only? And if the sorrows of these tragic heroes, whether of history or fiction, be so ill-portrayed that he is not moved to tears, lo! he goes away dissatisfied; but if he be moved to passion, he stays, he looks on intently, he actually weeps for pleasure.' Now this idea, so obvious and commonplace, which all moralists from Horace downwards have lightly touched on, does Augustine continue to work upon and exaggerate, till it seems in his eyes to demand the intervention of divine Providence itself. 'But Thy faithful mercy watched over me from afar, while I consumed myself with such grievous iniquities, pursuing a profane curiosity even to the brink of the treacherous abyss

and the beguiling service of devils.' His language, thus inflamed, becomes yet darker and more mysterious; he would lead us to imagine that there is yet some worse sin in the background, of which, penitent as he is, he cannot bring himself to cleanse his breast by confession. 'I dared,' he says, 'even while Thy solemnities were being celebrated within Thine own church, to devise and compass a business deserving death for its fruits, for which Thou scourgedst me with grievous punishments, though as nothing to my fault,—O Thou, my exceeding Mercy, my God, my Refuge from these terrible destroyers!'[1]

What, then, was this dreadful business, deserving death for its fruits—death in this world, or death in the world to come? What the grievous punishments with which it was visited, though as nothing in comparison with its enormity? Can it be that his mind misgave him at the last, and that these his solemn confessions are no full confessions after all—that he has not withheld from us his lighter errors, but has kept the veil drawn over what was really grave, really heinous? All, I think, that we can

[1] My rendering of the language of the Confessions is taken substantially from a translation published by James Parker and Co. of Oxford.

further gather from the imperfect disclosure is that, in addition to the instances of infirmity already mentioned, the good man had indulged in the vanity of seeking mere human wisdom, mere human applause, the vanity of taking pleasure in his success in the schools, in which he became a favourite declaimer. He was perhaps the spoilt child of fashion; he was flattered and intoxicated by the praises of the worthless, and even the reprobate. 'And now,' he says, 'I was chief in the school of Rhetoric, whereat I rejoiced proudly, and swelled with arrogance, though—Lord, thou knowest—far more quiet, and far removed from those *subverters* among whom I lived, ashamed, shameless as I was, that I was not altogether like unto them. With them I lived, and was sometimes delighted with their friendship, whose doings I did ever abhor; for nothing can be liker the very deeds of devils than theirs were.' We get, indeed, from these ejaculations a very obscure idea of who these subverters were. We may suppose that they were the captious Sophists of the schools, at no time more abounding, who took the better or the worse side at random, and amused themselves with perverting common sense and subverting healthy principles: such persons as we have all met and had to deal with

in our own experience, and who have soon found their just level in the estimation of most of us. Surely it has been no heinous sin if we from time to time have been blinded by their sophistries, have been tickled by their compliments, or have trifled with their seductions. May we not hope, then, that, despite of these vehement self-denunciations, the sins even of this youthful libertine might be blotted out by the tears of the Recording Angel?

In studying the Confessions of the holy Augustine, as well as of many other good men who have taken them for their model, we must always guard against the morbid exaggerations of a sensitive nature, to countenance which the Word of God itself, misread or misinterpreted, is too often perverted. But, not to trespass here on the functions of the pulpit, I will rather pause to point out the characteristic difference between the confessions of the pious Christian, be he an Augustine, a François de Sales, a Cowper, or a Newton, and those of the most devout of the Pagans before them, of such a good and candid self-examiner as the Emperor Marcus Antoninus. We have in the Meditations of this Pagan saint the nearest counterpart to the Christian effusions before us. The writers of the one book and

of the other were perhaps equally sincere, equally devout. Both were equally impressed with a sense of moral duty; both equally acknowledged their responsibility to a higher spiritual Power; Augustine saw indeed a *Being* where Antoninus could only recognise a *Principle.* Augustine had a clearer apprehension of consequences to follow on his discharging or failing to discharge the duties he acknowledged. Antoninus knew neither of the reward nor the punishment, even while the duty was not the less present to his understanding. Accordingly, that which in the mind of the Christian is a sin, appears to the Pagan a defect or an infirmity. The one repents, the other grieves; the one calls on his God to strengthen and amend him, the other falls back upon his own sense and courage, and only resolves to reform himself. Augustine falls on his knees and prays for pardon through the unmerited mercy of a reconciled Saviour. Antoninus looks only to satisfy his own sense of what is just and fitting. If this he cannot do—and he painfully feels that he cannot—he will do his best; and he does his best. He looks neither with hope nor fear to the future, if there be a future; but his serenity—let us not call it apathy, though the word bears the stamp of Zeno—is hardly

ruffled by the crash of the world around him. The Roman Empire is about to fall to pieces; the Stoic philosopher will work for it and fight for it, but if it must fall, let it do so! The Empire did fall to pieces, in the very sight of Augustine; we shall see hereafter what the Christian Saint thought of its fall, and the spiritual application he made of it.

So imperfect was the spiritual training of the most spiritual among the Pagans! Yet it was through the teaching of the Greeks—it was from the schools of the Platonists and the Stoics—that many of the Christian Fathers were first led to the source of true religion. Alas! that Antoninus should have wilfully rejected the hand which was held out to him from Heaven, when he scorned the witness of the Christians who were martyred almost in his presence! Augustine, we may say with pride, took the better part. This Christian Saint was first led to Christ by the study of a Pagan scripture, and he freely acknowledges the obligation. The perusal of Cicero's Hortensius, on which he lighted in a season of personal affliction on the death of a friend, kindled his love of Truth; for it spoke to him after the manner of the Academics, in genial accents, of God and a future life. Of course, his progress in the enquiries

which followed was slow and unsteady. It could not be otherwise. He could not grasp divine Truth in its highest form all at once. He confesses that at this crisis the reading of God's own Word, with which his heart had never been brought in contact, made little impression on him. He felt some interest in the simplicity of its language, some admiration for it, and for the directness of its appeals to the feelings and the understanding. But his heart was not to be so soon touched; the eye of the spirit was not yet opened, or rather it glanced at first obliquely from the Truth itself to the false shadows of the Truth with which the way of religious enquiry is ever beset. If his career was diverted from the grosser illusions of the senses, it fell upon the more subtle distractions of heresy and knowledge falsely so called.

The record of this fervent Christian's speculations should be deeply interesting and instructive to all who in an age of intellectual training are called on to pursue the studies upon which an intelligent belief must ultimately rest. 'This book' (the Hortensius), he says, 'diverted my affection and turned my prayers from the desire of worldly distinction, of distinction especially in worldly knowledge, to Thine

own self, O Lord! Every vain hope became at once worthless to me, and I longed with incredible ardour for a new life of wisdom; and now I began to rise up that I might return unto Thee. For it was not to sharpen my tongue that I employed that book of Cicero; nor did it infuse into me its style, but its matter. How did I then burn to remount from earthly things unto Thee! Nor knew I what Thou wouldst do with me; for with Thee is wisdom. And since at that time apostolic Scripture had not yet been made known to me, I was delighted with that exhortation to philosophy so far only, that I was thereby roused and inflamed to love, seek, and obtain, not this or that *opinion*, but wisdom itself whatsoever it were. And this alone checked me, thus enkindled, that the name of Christ was not in the book. For this name, according to Thy mercy, O my Lord, this name of my Saviour thy Son had my tender heart, even with my mother's milk, devoutly drunk in and deeply treasured; and whatsoever was without that name, though never so learned, polished, or true, took not entire hold of me.' For such was the simple element of religion which the young Augustine had received from his mother, herself but an uninstructed

believer; such was the superficial training of multitudes in those days of rudimentary Christianity. And is not such the slender training of multitudes even in our own day, after all the Christian ages that have passed? Yet, as we see, it was something, and it carried with it the capacity for fuller development, but not all at once.

'I resolved then,' he continues, 'to bend my mind to the Holy Scriptures, that I might see *what they really were*. And, lo! I discover a thing not understood of the proud, not laid open to children, lowly in its access, in its recesses lofty and veiled with mysteries; and I was not such an one as could enter into it, nor stoop my neck to follow its leading. For not as I now speak did I then feel when I first turned to those Scriptures; but their style seemed to me unworthy to be compared with the stateliness of Tully; for my swelling pride shrunk from their holiness, nor could my sharp wit pierce to the interior thereof. . . . So it was that I fell among men proudly doting, exceeding carnal, trifling, and prating, in whose mouth were the snares of the devil, limed only with the syllables of Thy name, O Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost the Paraclete. These names departed not out of

their mouths, but so far forth as the sound only, for their hearts were void of truth. Yet they cried out, Truth, Truth! and discoursed much thereof in my ears. But they spake falsehood not of Thee only, who truly art the Truth, but even of those elements of this world which are Thy creatures. Thus to one hungering after Thee they served up the sun and moon' (meaning objects of elemental worship), 'beautiful works of Thine, but yet Thy *works* only, not Thine own self; no, nor Thy chief works. For Thy spiritual works are superior to the material, celestial though these too be and brilliant. But I was hungering and thirsting after Thee, Thine ownself —the Truth—in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

The vague speculations on divine things into which the earnest enquirer was thus led could not fail to group, to crystallise themselves, as it were, in some formal system of belief. The time was favourable to the rapid generation of crude opinion on spiritual matters. The old mythology of the Pagan world was dying or even dead; but the field it had quitted, the insatiable void in the human heart which demands a belief of some sort, had given birth to many theories, each of which held out to some, at

some times, bright hopes of satisfaction. The religious tendencies of the day looked to some means of reconciliation between the elements of ancient belief and of prevailing scepticism. Heresy, or the wilful handling of Divine Scripture, exercised great powers of seduction over the hearts of really earnest thinkers at a period when ideas were thus confused and intermingled. Heresy became the ally and interpreter of Paganism. She soothed the pride of philosophy in substituting salvation through so-called knowledge, or the inner light, for salvation through conversion and self-humiliation. Thus it was that the Gnostic heresy pretended to be the science of religion. Looking into human nature as discovered to us by experience, it undertook to demonstrate the truths of religion by their conformity thereto. Manicheism, a form of Gnosticism with which the Christian Fathers maintained the closest struggle, combined the Fire-worship of Persia with some fragments of the Gospel only, and those picked out arbitrarily from the Divine Scriptures. It conceived of the world as a kingdom of light stretched alongside of a conterminous realm of darkness. Between these two spheres of the universe there raged eternal warfare. Such was the general theory of the Manicheans,

and they went on further to explain it thus :—Darkness, assisted by the agency of demons, has invaded the region of light, and man is ever subject to their contending influence. Christ and the Paraclete are come down from the Sun to teach us how to reject the element of darkness. This element is contained in matter; matter is darkness; matter is evil and the enemy of the soul; the body must be fortified against it, must be spiritualised by discipline, by mortification and ascetic torments. But the reaction from such restraints to corruption and debauchery has been ever found to be inevitable. Such was the observation of Augustine himself, who was for a time ensnared by the pretensions of this heresy; such was no doubt the personal experience of the many Christian believers who fell under the same delusion. It is worth observing that the best of the Pagan Moralists entertained the same distrust of Manicheism as the Christian Fathers.

From Manicheism Augustine wandered to the latest of the Pagan philosophies, which bore the title of the New Platonism. This was in fact no other than a desperate attempt of the ancient Hellenism to revive itself by assimilation with the mysticism of India. It made no pretence of representing

Christianity; on the contrary, it attacked it; nevertheless it did not fail, while attacking, to borrow no little from it. The New Platonism spoke not less fervently than the Gospel of union with God; but by this union with the Divine it meant absorption into it; it pointed not to a conscious independent co-existence with the Deity, a life hid with Christ in God, as the Christian might say, but to the annihilation of the creature in his contemplation of the Creator, the Supreme All in All. It rejected a future life altogether in any consistent sense of the word. The Pantheism of the Greeks thus manipulated becomes the Nirvana of the Buddhists. It implies inevitably the destruction of all individual responsibility or duty. With this system, which has no doubt its seductive side, Augustine did for a moment dally; but the fibre of his conscience, so to say, was too tough to be long relaxed by it. We may conceive that the painful study of it, and the struggle with it, imparted to him both vigour and knowledge. By meditation on the Logos of Philo and Plotinus, an impersonal abstraction of divine Truth and Wisdom, he raised himself to a higher level of spiritual thought; he acknowledged the need of a Personal Word, an incarnate representative of the Divine

nature, God of God, such as he might now remember to have heard of from his mother's lips—the Christ of the Holy Scriptures. Such were the various ideas which met or coursed one another in the depths of his inmost soul during the long period of his anxious speculations. At one time the death of a Christian friend, throughout the whole period the unceasing prayers of his mother, operated towards the final conversion which was still in store for him.

But while he was still wandering in the mazes of the Alexandrian school of Platonism he continued to devote himself to the rhetorical exercises which he now regarded as the business of his life, and the more so as he became more and more dissatisfied with his spiritual speculations. He resolved to quit his home at Carthage, and throw himself into the larger theatre of Rome. His dream of glory was here suddenly cut short. It required only the ordinary accident of a severe illness to teach him submission to the overruling hand of Providence. His desolate mother, whom he had left behind, speedily rejoined him; and, when he had recovered, accompanied him to a quieter, but still an important, post as a teacher at Milan. There it was that he met with St. Ambrose, then at the height of his autho-

rity and influence. Struck with the erudition, the eloquence, the fame of the great preacher, he was constant in hearing, and cultivating acquaintance with him. He felt perhaps for the first time the grandeur of the Divine Scriptures in the homage paid them by a man so eminent, who spake not from the level of his own human heart, but from the vantage ground of the Word written for him, expounding God's declared will, line by line, precept upon precept. As he turned himself to the Bible, and studied it more earnestly, he learnt to regard the Bishop as its appointed interpreter, the Church of which he was a bishop as its appointed guardian.

To Ambrose Monica disclosed her anxiety for her erring and wilful offspring, and entreated him to lend his assistance, and undertake the conversion of so hopeful a scholar. But, Ambrose hesitated, it seems, to put himself forward. He judged perhaps that a ripe conversion should be the work of the seeker himself. Nevertheless, he did not send the mother away without words of comfort: 'Be sure,' he whispered, 'that the child of so many prayers will never be a castaway.' Augustine continued long to hearken, to study, and to reflect. His heart was touched, his judgment was perhaps convinced,

while his pride still withheld him from yielding. His tender conscience still presented to him the pride of life in its brightest colours, and asked him importunately:—could he make up his mind, so young and lusty as he was, to abjure and overcome it? His difficulties were still moral rather than intellectual. But a voice within him, which he took for a Divine message, repeated in his ears the stirring cry, '*Take and read, take and read,*' and he still constantly studied the Scriptures, till his mind became finally resolved on meeting with the words of the Apostle, 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' 'No further would I read,' he says, 'nor needed I, for instantly, this sentence ended, a serene light was shed in my heart, and all darkness of doubt vanished from me.'

Thus was the holy Augustine brought to Christ. It was not of his own will, but of the grace of God. Often, as he says, had he tried the power of his own will. Many things had he willed to do, and he was able to do them. Many things had he willed not to do, and he found himself able to refrain from them;

but this one thing was not in his power; he could not will to believe, and believe accordingly; he could not will to subdue the inherent evil nature, and therewith effect the victory over his instincts. 'More easily,' he says, 'did my body obey the weakest willing of my soul in moving my limbs at its nod, than did my soul obey itself in accomplishing this its momentous will by willing only.' It was by *grace*, he would infer, that he was converted; by *grace* he was saved, as manifestly as Saul on his journey to Damascus. I wish you to note these steps in the new believer's spiritual course, and the special means by which he confessed that he was directed, inasmuch as the effects most proper to them will appear presently, when we consider the main lines of his theological teaching.

But to continue first with the narrative before us. As soon as the call was thus divinely given, 'putting my finger or some other mark,' as he says, 'in the place, I shut the volume, and with a calmed countenance made it known to my friend Alypius. He asked me what I had read: I pointed out to him the passage, and he went on to look even further than I had pointed, and I knew not what was coming. But these were the words that actually followed:

"Him that is weak in the faith receive;" these words he applied directly to himself, and by this admonition was he strengthened; . . . and so, with no anxious delay, he joined me. Thence we go in to my mother; we tell her; we relate in order how it all took place; she leapt for joy and blessed Thee, O God, "who art able to do above all that we ask or think," for she perceived that Thou, God, hadst given her more for me than she had been ever wont to beg by her pitiful and most sorrowful groanings.'

The records of the holy life which followed are slender. Augustine's practical career was henceforth uneventful, though every day of it was given to the good works of preaching and teaching. He first retired for a time to prepare himself for baptism, and received his Christian initiation together with the son of his illicit union—Adeodatus, or God's gift, as he had wantonly named him—who died however, as did also his friend Alypius, not long after. From Milan and Rome, in which he had already lost his former interest, he now returned to Africa; but his good mother died, no doubt in the fulness of her joy, before he embarked at Ostia. Arrived in Africa his first wish was to seek solitude, and devote himself wholly to pious meditation, like the converted

Apostle before him, like so many genuine converts to the Faith at that time, and in all time succeeding. Converted to the faith and church of Christ he still felt that the visible Church on earth fell far short of the mark of her high calling, and it was some time before he could be content to overlook her deficiencies, and accept the duty of living on to amend and purify her. Thus he passed some years at his native place, gradually emerging by the repute of his writings from the obscurity to which he had devoted himself. Making by chance a visit to Hippo, a small city on the coast, the modern Bona, he suffered himself to be ordained there to the priesthood by the bishop Valerius, at whose death, which shortly followed, the congregation insisted on choosing him for their chief pastor. Augustine became Bishop of Hippo, and there he resided for the most part to the end of his life, conferring upon the place a notoriety in ecclesiastical history which it would not have obtained otherwise. At Hippo it is supposed that he was buried; and when the modern Bona fell, some years ago, into the hands of the French, the very spot of his interment was said to be discovered, and it is proposed, I am told, to erect a cathedral church upon it.[1]

[1] A tomb of Augustine is also shown at Pavia; the sculptures

From the year 395, when he became a Bishop, to his death in 429, Augustine maintained by the merit of his teaching and preaching the most authoritative position throughout the Western Church. His influence has been often characterised as a moral papacy, freely accorded him by Christian believers, wherever at least his writings in the Latin tongue could be appreciated. He took indeed no practical part in the government of the Church beyond the narrow limits of his own diocese in a corner of Christendom; but by his theological works our indefatigable divine ruled the Church universal. He discussed and defined perhaps every article of the Faith. The questions then principally in debate—the same, we may say, without meaning to be satirical, which have been more or less explicitly in debate ever since—were three, which we may summarise by the names of the Arian, the Donatist, and the Pelagian. Upon each of these I will now say a few words only, simply to explain the position which our great Doctor took in regard to each of them, and to show how his position was in each case actually based

with which it is adorned, consisting of more than three hundred figures, is a work of the fourteenth century; nor, it seems, is any credit due to the tradition that it incloses the Saint's actual remains. See Valéry, *Voyages en Italie*, i. 215.

upon his own personal experience, upon the experience gained by his own moral and spiritual trials. The theology of Augustine is truly a philosophy of human nature taught by a personal example.

First, the Arian hypothesis, speaking broadly and passing over its subtler distinctions, implied the entire inferiority of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, divine though they were, to the one Supreme Father. The discussion of this famous hypothesis occupies the foreground in the theology of the Nicene period. To this discussion everything else gives way. It results in a sudden, a violent, a world-wide schism, a long but fortunately not a permanent one. The orthodox Church might seem for a time to be utterly overwhelmed by it. Coming at a moment when the conversion, first of the civilised and again of the barbarian Pagans, was hanging in the balance, and sweeping these new allies by millions into its toils, it might seem to human eyes to portend a great semi-Pagan reaction but slightly veiled under Scriptural phraseology. For, in fact, the principle of Arianism bordered immediately upon Paganism. It was the acknowledgment of an inferior hierarchy of superhuman beings, directed and overruled by one Supreme God. No matter whether the inferior

divinities were one or two only, or whether they were counted by hundreds and thousands, the principle was in either case the same, the idea, namely, the Father of All, the Author and Finisher of our being, is to be approached through the ministrations of heroes, demigods, or demons.

We may easily conceive that a pseudo-Christianity of such a lower type might prove most acceptable to the blind half-reasoning Pagans to whom it was presented by men who undertook to bring over Greeks and Goths to the religious belief of their sovereign lord the Emperor of Constantinople. We may ourselves reverently believe that Providence designed to make use of this error for breaking in these stiffnecked people gradually to the discipline of the true faith. But theirs was now a nominal, not a real or genuine Christianity; and Athanasius with others after him, and last in due season Augustine, were raised up, first to keep alive the protest against it, and finally to overcome and destroy it. It was by Augustine most of all that the Arian heresy was scotched, if not actually killed. The principle it involves has indeed never been extirpated; it is too natural to the human heart, too truly a form of our natural Paganism, to be ever wholly extinguished;

but after it had done its work in preparing the complete illumination of the unbelieving world, it was suffered by God's providence to fall from the high station it had occupied throughout Christendom in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Now Augustine himself, as we have seen, had escaped out of the darkness of Paganism into the light of a genuine Christian faith. He had passed through the forms of Pagan misbelief most congenial to the Arian theory of Christianity. He had found by his own experience how scientifically untenable were the notions of the Gnostics and Manicheans, with their arbitrary hypotheses of successive incarnations of Divinity, of successive æons, an endless and objectless series of divine beings, all subordinate to the one chief God, of whom they are mere representatives and shadows. The principle of Arianism was after all identical with the principle held equally by the Pagan, the Gnostic, and the Manichee. Augustine's acuteness discovered the same root of error at the bottom of all these forms of misbelief. And so it was, as I have said, that he was led by his personal experience of Pagan blindness to trace the shades of Christian heresy which still, after the fall of Paganism, confronted him in the churches of his

own diocese and elsewhere throughout Christendom. This then is why our great Doctor wrote his palmary treatise, 'De Trinitate.'

Again, Augustine found himself at the outset of his episcopacy in controversy with the sect of the Donatists, who may be not unfitly regarded as the Puritans of the early Church. They represented the broad principle which has always prevailed more or less among believers, which had been maintained in the third century by the Montanists, and again by the Novatianists, that the true Church of Christ is the assembly of really pious believers only, and admits of no merely nominal membership under conventional conditions of acceptance. Thus neither a nation, nor a province, nor a parish, they would say, can claim in strictness the title of Christian. It is the individual who is Christian, he who is called out of the world of unbelief, not the community, which even in the purest of churches must always comprehend many false or nominal believers, many evildoers and practical unbelievers, as tares among the wheat. But from the time when the profession of belief began to spread, still more since the acceptance of Christ by the State had favoured the admission into the Church of a multitude of unworthy

members, the Church, it might be said, had lent itself to a falsehood and a sin, the Church, popularly so-called, had forfeited its claim to be the true body of Christ. The true believer, the genuine Catholic, was called upon to come out from it, to renounce it with all its works, to set up a true church in his own bosom, and communicate as a fellow-Christian with those only who had made the same discovery of its error as himself, and had made the sacrifice together with him of its pretended blessings. Now in the time of the Diocletian persecution some of the weaker brethren had been induced to surrender their copies of the Scriptures at the demand of the Pagan authorities. Some persons of name and position among the believers, some bishops even in Numidia, had saved their lives by this discreditable weakness. Such men were noted, shunned, and vilified by their braver or perhaps more fortunate brethren, who had escaped without being reduced to make any such unworthy compliances. A great cry was raised against them; vehement demand was made for their excommunication. The Church in Africa became sorely agitated; but at last it was decided that their contrition should be accepted, and they should thereupon be admitted as before to the privileges of the

Christian profession. Still a minority at least of rigorists, or Puritans, as we might call them, protested loudly against this indulgence. The Donatists, so called from their leader, declared that the Church had denied its Lord, and compromised its orthodoxy; and they proceeded, upon this foundation alone, to constitute a new Church which, ever mindful of its point of starting, should require personal holiness as the one specific condition of church-membership. So firmly indeed was the principle of Episcopacy established that no occasion was taken for renouncing or modifying this primitive institution. Puritans though they were, the Donatists were not Presbyterians. Our modern Puritans, it will be remembered, were not at first voluntarily anti-prelatical. These separatists set up a rival episcopal church in Africa; and at the end of the century, when Augustine came in contact with them, they are said to have numbered in their corner of the Empire as many as three hundred prelates.

Of the theological aspects of the question between the combatants I will only say that the Donatists were plainly extravagant in demanding absolute holiness of every professing member of the visible Church under pain of exclusion from its communion.

Of such a qualification human eyes can be but imperfect judges. Yet we cannot say that they erred in making the condition of admission a serious reality. The Church visible upon earth must be, no doubt, a community, if not of actual saints, at least of such as are bent upon attaining to sanctification. From the first the Church has admitted daily not such as were, but 'such as *should be* saved,' or were engaged in the process of working out their salvation. She has a right to exact of her members the proof of their actual belief and their sincere devotion. The Donatists carried this right beyond all sober reason. But, on the other hand, Augustine seems to have no less deceived himself when he maintained that the true mark of the Church is simply the visibility of its exterior constitution, the form, that is, rather than the essence of godliness. The Donatists looked, in short, too exclusively to the subjective character of a true saving faith. With their narrow, their provincial views, so to call them, they thought perhaps that this saving faith was strictly confined to the members of their own special sect, whom they had so carefully sifted from the general mass. Augustine, on the other hand, regarded a saving faith objectively, as the prerogative of all those who

were formally included in the historical church which traced its credentials from the Apostles. Churchmen he considered as 'a peculiar people,' just as strictly as the Jewish people before them; not meaning of course that all should be saved who dwelt within the Church's pale, but that none should be saved who strayed beyond it. 'No one,' he said, 'can have Christ for his head, who is not comprehended in the body of Christ.' Now this body, he would continue, is the orthodox Church of Christ. To pretend that the existence of this Church depends on the holiness, greater or less, of its individual members is a great error; we must fix our eyes solely on the divine side of the institution itself. The Church is God's own foundation; it is built upon the rock of His immutable and supreme authority; to make it depend on the characters of men would be to place it on a moving sand. Accordingly, while the Donatists placed holiness before catholicity, Augustine, on his part, established an inverse relation between the two attributes.[1] We may conclude that the contest between our great Teacher and the Donatists had, in fact, two sides, each of which presented one aspect

[1] I would refer the reader more particularly to M. Pressensé's Essay in the *Séances Historiques à Genève*, p. 292.

of the Truth. Augustine put forth his consummate ability in the combat, and seems to have discomfited his adversary at the time in the forum of the public conscience; but the principle in debate has been agitated with little cessation ever since, and assuredly it never can be settled except by admitting that God, and God only, knows who are His own for salvation or reprobation, and that the limits of the objective and the subjective in spiritual life can never be defined by a mere human judgment.

The Donatist sect, as I have said, was Episcopalian, not Presbyterian. To use our modern phraseology, it was Evangelical rather than Puritan. But the offence it gave to the Ecclesiastical or High Church party was enhanced by its allying itself with the Circumcellions, the Independents or Radicals of the age; in which we may note a further concidence with some features in modern church-history. These Circumcellions had, no doubt, their own social grievances; perhaps they had some spiritual grievances also, but they carried their resistance to law and order, both secular and ecclesiastical, beyond all endurable limits. They made themselves truly the pests of society; they broke out here and there into open violence. To suppress them even by force

became a political necessity, and the Donatists naturally suffered in general estimation from their connection with them. When the Church, at the instigation of Augustine, denounced the Donatists as heretics, and called in the secular power to impose conformity upon them, it was no more than might have been expected from the known infirmity of human nature. But alas! an act of conformity is too closely allied to an act of persecution. Augustine, alas! was the first persecutor! The name and authority of the Saint has sanctioned the first fatal perversion of the text, 'Compel them to come in,' which has been the root and ground of all Christian persecution from that time to the present.

I cannot excuse, and I confess I have not the heart to extenuate this grievous error. All I can do, in behalf of our pious Teacher, is to point out, by reference to what has been said of his early life, the personal experience which seems to have imbued him with such horror of heretical pravity. When, as a late-converted Christian, he looked back to the course of his varied struggles, to the aspirations after spiritual truth which had so long entranced him,—ever baffled and disappointed, yet ever springing up again with new hopes and flatteries,—when he remembered

how he had at first been merely careless and regardless of the spiritual life, listening perhaps for a moment to his mother's prayer, and again letting it drop unheeded from his memory, attending perhaps with greater interest to some utterance of worldly wisdom from his father, and wondering for a moment how the two might be reconciled; how he turned from these to the more attractive lessons of the Pagan Sophists, which seemed to promise such great things, and were at last found to establish so little; how again, advancing further, he betook himself to the systematic teaching of the philosophical schools, and traversed one after another the fields of thought which the Platonists, the Academics, the Alexandrians successively opened to him; how, still dissatisfied, still eager, and more than ever anxious to come to the knowledge of the truth, which still eluded his pursuit, he sought among the Gnostics that combination of divine Revelation with human guess-work which is the root of Heresy, and still found himself no nearer to God, or to the Word of God, by which only He can be approached; when he remembered, I say, how he had gone through all this course of fruitless enquiry, in which success seemed ever more distant, yet ever more vital to

him; then he may well have muttered to himself, *What* have I been doing all this time? *How* have I been seeking Truth? What standard of Truth, what test of Truth have I set up for myself? Surely, I have been wrong, hopelessly wrong, from the beginning. I have been making myself, my own feelings, my own judgment, the measure of Truth,—the human of the Divine—the finite of the Infinite—myself of God! And when, by God's favour, he got the opportunity of consulting the experienced Ambrose upon his spiritual troubles, may not the Christian monitor have simply replied to him: True, you have been making yourself judge of matters quite beyond your means of judgment: you have been choosing for yourself, choosing your own means, your own road, your own oracles. This is *Heresy;* this is the source of error against which the holy Apostles have warned you; this is that perversion of the human reason against which the Holy Scriptures are set up as a beacon of light and safety? Thus warned, the scales would seem to drop from his eyes. The sermons of Ambrose himself, the comments of the pious men who flocked around him, the teaching of the Christian Church at Milan, the discipline of the catechumens with whom he was now ranging

himself, would all tend to give him clearer and deeper views of the errors whereby he had been deluded; he would quickly learn to connect in his own mind every evil practice among the false teachers with the heretical pravity thus fastened upon them; he would come to look with deep, perhaps with excessive jealousy upon every departure from the strict doctrine and still stricter discipline of the Church, and to deem it the Christian's first duty to exert whatever authority he possessed in the extirpation—aye, even the forcible extirpation of error. But the Pagan was surely wiser than St. Augustine, who warned us long before, 'Deorum injuriæ Dîs curæ' (the gods will look to their own honour); or, as I would rather say in the words of Scripture itself, 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; I will repay.' The Christian Origen, the Christian Tertullian, had both already decisively declared that 'Religion cannot constrain Religion.'

I have well-nigh exhausted the time which can be allotted me, and you can imagine how inexhaustible is the subject on which I have ventured to make these almost desultory observations. But there is one other point which, before concluding, I would not leave altogether unnoticed. An essay or lecture

on the character and influence of the great Augustine, without reference to his contest with Pelagius, and the question of Grace and Freewill with which his name is most popularly connected, would be even too glaringly deficient. Yet, what can I say upon it within the compass of two or three pages? What light could I throw upon it, so slight as is my own acquaintance with the details of that wide and weighty controversy, so inadequate as is my ability to thread the intricate reasonings it involves? The utterances of the holy Doctor upon these abstruse subjects are scattered throughout his works, and refer to various periods of his life, and no doubt to different stages of opinion in his own mind. I do not suppose that any one considers the many attempts which have been made to harmonize them as really successful. It will be generally allowed that in refuting the Manichees, who maintained the entire corruption of human nature, Augustine admitted the freedom of the Will, so far at least as to long for the Good, to aim at it, if not actually to attain to it; while, on the other hand, in controversy with the Pelagians, he would seem to assert that the unregenerate man, of his own power, can neither do nor will any good thing.[1]

[1] Hagenbach (*Hist. of Doctrines*, vol. i. § 112) summarises the controversy on the point of Liberty and Grace :—

Nevertheless, theologians have allowed that whatever difference may be traced in his views on this point under different circumstances, it is as the asserter of Divine Grace, of Predestination, of Election by the will of God only, that Augustine is most eminently distinguished. This is the judgment which, however modified, explained, and perhaps explained away, has been the foundation of the Church's teaching in all after ages, to which she has been again and again recalled by many eminent masters when she seemed to have obscured or forgotten it. Now, I have tried to show, in some special instances, how our Doctor's views were plainly moulded by the character of his own spiritual experiences. I would counsel you to look to similar causes and effects in the case before us. The question of Grace and

'Pelagius admitted that man in his moral efforts stands in need of the Divine aid, and therefore spoke of the grace of God as assisting the imperfections of man by a variety of means. He supposed, however, that this grace of God is something external, and added to the efforts put forth by the freewill of man; it must therefore be discovered by virtuous inclinations. Augustine, on the other hand, looked upon it as the creative principle of life, which produces out of itself the liberty of the will which is entirely lost in the natural man. . . . the regenerate man alone can will the good . . . . operari Deum in cordibus hominum non solum veras revelationes sed bonas etiam voluntates.'

Freewill has been agitated among men from the first. In spite of anything Augustine may have written, or the hundreds of disputants since Augustine, this same question is still presented to every one of us, to each in his generation, and will surely never approach more nearly to a definite settlement than at the first. And why? Because it is not a question of logical or mathematical truth, which is subject to abstract and immutable laws, but refers to the diverse constitution and temperaments of men, which can never be expected to coincide. It is a mystery, and a mystery has ever two sides. Augustine took the side of Grace, and threw himself into the controversy—which in his day had assumed a very practical shape, when Pelagius was threatening to divide the Church on a question which seemed to involve the doctrine of Redemption itself—threw himself into it with all his energy, and I would add, with much of his fanatic extravagance. And why did he take this view? Surely, it was the overpowering sense of his own personal experience that impelled him to it. Reflection upon the chequered course of his own spiritual career would impress him with a sense of the inability of the human will to acquire an effectual knowledge of Divine Truth. In the full enjoyment of his intel-

lectual freedom, he had ran through all the known systems of moral discipline; he was conscious how truly he had *wished* to attain to the highest principles of religion, how earnest had been his efforts. He had become aware of the hindrance imposed on his aspirations by the world and the flesh; he had confessed and repented of sin; nevertheless, neither Paganism, nor philosophy, nor any self-devised notions of Revelation itself, had availed to satisfy him that he had at last received a call from God, and had become actually converted to the Faith as it is in Christ Jesus. Then it was that the conviction was forced upon him that the call must be the *gift*, the free gift of God Himself; that the human will, the mere natural desire, however intense, has no power of itself to lead a man to his Redeemer; and that any system of religion which assumes man's possessing such a power must stand self-condemned under a true interpretation of the Divine Word. But, inasmuch as he knew only too well how opposed this conviction was to the popular notions of the time, and how grievously he had been himself deluded by them, he resolved to take his stand firmly upon this cardinal Truth, to follow it out to any logical extreme in the distance, to admit of no compromise of

66865

the doctrine of Grace, as the only ordained means of salvation. Nor was it possible for him, perhaps, having once laid down this principle, to shrink from dogmatizing on its direct corollary, the doctrine of divine Predestination. If a man's own freewill cannot secure divine Grace for him, it is because Grace is given by God to those whom He has chosen and appointed for it, not to whosoever himself desires it. Grace, Predestination, Election, are all closely linked together; so combined they form the most prominent feature in St. Paul's inspired teaching. But St. Paul's general doctrine is again modified by the sense which all Scripture conveys to us of our personal responsibility. It is clear that both must co-exist, diversity in unity, harmonized only in the Divine omniscience; predestination cannot destroy responsibility, responsibility must not put out of sight predestination. We have before us, as I said, a mystery which has two sides; imperfect as we are, we must accept it as it stands revealed to us. But if Augustine, like so many teachers after him, leant too much to the one side, as at least in his controversy with Pelagius will be generally conceded, we may thus trace his error to a sentiment which was really and deeply religious. For he felt the obligation of giving all the glory to

God for the immense blessing he had himself received; he felt the duty of glorifying God, especially in a generation so much addicted to the glorification of human nature. He burned with just indignation at the pride of Paganism and philosophy, which, though deprived of secular power, still contended intellectually for the mastery with the advancing convictions of Christian faith. Again and again have similar conditions arisen in human society at many later periods; and again has the preaching of Grace, Election, and Predestination assumed the same prominence in Christian teaching as in the days of St. Paul and of Augustine. Such was the preaching of a Luther, a Knox, and a Calvin, which struck down the Paganism of the corrupted Church in the sixteenth century throughout so large a part of Christendom: such was the preaching which uttered so bold a protest from the lips of Nicole, of Arnauld, of Pascal, against the corrupt Church of France under the prevailing influence of the Jesuits: such was the preaching by which Whitefield and the so-called Calvinists among ourselves, such as Newton and Cecil, Romaine and Toplady, awakened the Church of England from its philosophical pride or lethargy in the century before our own. If such preaching is not advanced

so vehemently in our churches and chapels at the present day as at earlier epochs, we may, I trust, take it as a sign that whatever our religious defects may be, there is less of the mere pride of intellect among professing Christians, a more effectual sense of our spiritual weakness, a better inclination to yield ourselves to the familiar teaching of those who are set over us; so that, comparing line with line and precept with precept, we may free ourselves from all one-sided exaggeration, and attain with submission and circumspection unto the true proportion of the Faith.[1]

[1] M. de Pressensé sums up the moral question involved in the controversy between Pelagius and Augustine with force, and I think with sound judgment, from the point of view both of religion and history:—

'On nous objectera, peut-être, qu'au point de vue moral l'augustinisme a des conséquences bien graves et qu'il porte atteinte à la responsabilité de la créature libre. Nous en convenons; mais nous affirmons que le sentiment qui a inspiré l'augustinisme, même dans ses plus fatales erreurs, était profondément religieux: ce sentiment c'était le besoin ardent de donner toute gloire à Dieu, de prosterner, de courber devant lui dans la poudre la créature coupable qui avait osé lui disputer sa gloire; c'était comme une revanche passionnée de l'humilité chrétienne contre l'orgueil humain. Qu'on n'oublie pas les circonstances dans lesquelles l'augustinisme s'est produit au quatrième siècle, comme aussi au seizième dans la réformation et au dix-septième dans le jansénisme; à ces trois époques une tentative audacieuse avait été faite de relever le mérite humain au-dess de la grâce. Les vrais chrétiens ne peuvent accepter

Slight as this sketch of Augustine's teaching has been, it has not left me room for any reference to the work which was perhaps, in his day, the most important of all—his treatise on the 'City of God.' Certainly, I have not forgotten it; but its interest is of an historical rather than a theological character, and it is to the dogmatic views of the great Doctor that the course of my observations on his life have led me in the present lecture. When I come, in another address, to speak of the historical foundation of the Papal pretensions, with Pope Leo the Great for my central figure, I shall have occasion to refer particularly to the ecclesiastical position asserted by this famous manifesto.

froidement une telle perversion. . . . Ils peuvent se tromper dans cette voie en exagérant leur réaction. . . . N'importe; ils accomplissent un acte essentiellement moral et religieux, tandis que leurs adversaires, qui peuvent avoir raison dans quelques-unes de leurs objections, obéissent néanmoins à une inspiration mondaine et subversaire de la vraie religion, car celle-ci implique la dépendance absolue de l'homme vis-à-vis de Dieu. L'histoire d'ailleurs apporte son puissant témoignage à l'augustinisme. Partout où il a prédominé le niveau de la vie religieuse et morale s'est élevé; partout où le pélagianisme a triomphé ce niveau s'est abaissé. . . . Ainsi donc répétons encore qu'au point de vue de la morale, comme à celui du dogme, s'il faut choisir entre l'augustinisme et le pélagianisme, plutôt cent fois le premier que le second.'—*Séances historiques*, p. 324.

LECTURE III.

ST. LEO THE GREAT, AND THE RISE OF THE PAPACY.

THE great Saint Augustine, of whose life and teaching I gave you a sketch in my last lecture, was still Bishop of Hippo at the period of the secular fall of Rome, early in the fifth century. The sack of the imperial city by the Goths led directly to the firmer establishment of the Christian Church in the West, and to the exaltation of the Roman see, and so, under the vigorous rule of the illustrious pontiff Leo, to the rise of the Papal supremacy. The sack of Rome has thus given a colour to the whole subsequent history of Europe, and I think we are justified in regarding that event as the legitimate commencement of modern society. As it has been tersely expressed by a great French poet—

Un grand destin commence, un grand destin s'achève.

Unless all history is to be written from the creation of the world, the historian must mark for himself

some definite epochs, and appropriate points both of starting and of pausing.

The Western empire had been defended against the barbarians under Alaric by the valour of Stilicho, and the invaders, though they had secured for themselves the passage of the Alps, could penetrate no farther southward. The puny emperor Honorius had abandoned Rome; but he had planted his throne in advance of the imperial city at Ravenna, a place at that time especially strong in itself, and convenient for government. Confident in the victories his able general had now achieved, he allowed himself to give way to some miserable personal jealousy, and contrived the assassination of his protector. On Stilicho's death the Goths stirred again. The Emperor, a feeble devotee, had had the temerity to exclude all Pagans from his military service. He was forced to remove the prohibition in all haste; but it was now too late. Alaric was advancing. No Roman commanders dared to confront him; but Honorius was satisfied when he saw the invader leave Ravenna on his flank, and throw himself upon the direct road to Rome. The citizens, thus deserted, were utterly dismayed. The ramparts of Aurelian had indeed been recently repaired, but the de-

scendants of Mars and Romulus had been forbidden to bear arms for two hundred years previously, and there were no disciplined legions at hand to take their place on the ramparts.

A curious incident followed. Certain Etruscans, it is said, fleeing before the advancing barbarians, entered the city. They spoke with fond regret of the long-neglected usages of their countrymen, and protested that, by resorting to their ancient rites, they had already saved one of their towns from falling into the enemy's hands. They had evoked lightning from heaven, and thrown the invading hosts into confusion. Pompeianus, prefect of the city, lent a facile ear to this hopeful story, and deigned to refer to the pontifical books, which, it seems, were still accessible, to direct him. From these he turned to the Roman bishop Innocent, who had succeeded to the great Ambrose of Milan in respect and authority among the believers. The bishop hesitated; he would not, indeed, refuse to allow the Etruscans to take their own measures, but they must do so on their own responsibility; they must do so privately. They replied that their rites must be performed at a public ceremonial; the people must take part in them; the senate must

mount the Capitol in solemn pomp, and perform the sacrifices ordained of old; otherwise, they would be ineffectual. We hear no further how Innocent conducted himself. The Pagan historian Zosimus declares that the senators themselves shrank from this bold assertion of Pagan belief, how much soever many of them might at heart incline to it; while a Christian authority does not scruple to affirm that they actually assisted at the impious rites, which proved, of course, utterly unavailing. Both the one party and the other was evidently concerned to justify, from its own point of view, the doom which fell on the devoted city; the Pagan hinting that it was provoked by the cowardice of the Pagans, the Christian that it was a righteous punishment for the want of faith in the believers; but which of them gave the true account, it seems impossible to determine. The story in either case is interesting to us, as showing how undecided were the convictions both of Christians and Pagans during the mortal crisis of the ancient superstitions, and how nearly, under a common calamity, they sympathised one with the other. Meanwhile, Alaric drew nearer. No aid could now come from Ravenna, and he straitened the supplies of the city, while he calmly awaited its surrender.

A large and unprepared population was soon reduced to extremity. The Christians exercised their charity to the utmost, but their means were presently exhausted. At last the citizens sued for mercy, and offered ransom. Alaric's demands seemed exorbitant. They threatened him with the despair of their enormous multitudes. 'The thicker the hay,' he exclaimed derisively, 'the easier to mow it!' When he named his lowest terms, they were struck with consternation. 'What, then, will you leave us?' they muttered. 'Your lives,' was his stern reply.

It is curious to note the price at which the great city was valued. The demands of the captor, as Zosimus particularly informs us, were 5,000 pounds of gold, 30,000 of silver, 4,000 silken robes, 3,000 pieces of scarlet cloth, 3,000 pounds of pepper. We may take the amount of gold and silver at 350,000*l.* of our money. The silk and the spice were no doubt very valuable. I do not know whether their price can be calculated more closely. But the whole sum, if fairly represented by half a million sterling, may moderate our ideas of the wealth and population of Rome at this period of its decline.[1] The ransom of

[1] The value assigned to the items enumerated must be taken

Paris, exacted by the Germans in 1871—five milliards of francs, or 200 millions sterling—would seem to have been four hundred times greater. Modern Paris contains, no doubt, thrice the numbers of Rome at the period before us, and I dare say ten times its wealth. Yet the greed of the Goths, barbarians as they were, seems trifling compared with that of their more civilised descendants in our own considerate days. But Alaric and his Goths were satisfied, and kept faith with the conquered people, who liquidated the charge by spoiling the temples and images of the ancient divinities. Among these images was one, says the Pagan historian, of Courage or Virtue, 'as the Romans call her': when this divinity was cast into the melting-pot, disappeared from Rome all that remained of her honour or valour. 'The men,' he adds, 'who were adepts in divine lore announced but too truly the ruin which should follow.'

Ruin was indeed impending, but the fall was yet

on a wide conjecture; but I believe we may estimate the pound of gold at about £50 in our money, and the pound of silver at 1-15th the value of gold. Accordingly, 5,000 lbs. of gold would amount to £250,000, 30,000 lbs. of silver (= 2,000 lbs. of gold) to £100,000.

for a moment deferred. Thereupon the weak and vacillating Emperor sought to make terms with the old idolatry he had hitherto proscribed. But adversity did not teach him to deal loyally with his triumphant enemy. Alaric felt himself aggrieved, and advanced again upon Rome. He passed round the walls, and seized upon the port of Ostia. The supplies of the city were at once cut off. She knew too well what must be her fate, and promptly opened her gates. The Goth had now changed his policy, and proclaimed a rival Emperor. His minion Attalus had been hitherto a Pagan: he now accepted Arian baptism among his new allies, who were mostly attached to the Arian profession; but at the same time he openly favoured the Pagan faction in the city, as still offering him the strongest support. So hard did the old religion die, even in these its expiring throes! But no sooner had Alaric withdrawn, than the throne of his feeble nominee was shaken. The people rose and drove away the pretender. Alaric now gave Attalus to understand that he must not affect to reign where he could not govern; but the conqueror undertook to avenge the insult thus offered to himself, and appeared a third time before the devoted walls. An early prophecy

had assured him that he should enter Rome: a voice still constantly echoed in his ears, crying out and saying, 'On, and destroy the city!'

The Romans closed their barriers, and pretended to defend them; but the Salarian gate was opened by treachery, and the Goths descended into the city on the 24th day of August 410. At the same point, 800 years before, the Gauls had entered Rome, bringing fire and sword. But Alaric was no Brennus; the Goths, though they had some desperate treacheries to avenge, were not bent on slaughter or destruction. The barbarians were content with some days of pillage, and doubtless the sack of the world's capital was not accomplished without violence and cruelty. Doubtless, men were slain in the defence of their homes or their families. Women were dishonoured. Slaves were set free, with such consequences as we may imagine. Concealed treasures were drawn forth by threats and tortures. Many houses, some temples, were given to the flames; but the Christians, for their part, ascribed such catastrophes generally to lightning, and pointed to the Divine judgment, as indicated thereby, which had at last fallen upon the Babylon of Revelation. Both Augustine and Jerome, who describe the event in excited language, seem

willing to extenuate the crimes of the conquerors, partly with a view to insinuating that the fall of Rome was God's work, not man's; partly to show that the Goths were softened, at least, even by the imperfect form of Gospel truth they had adopted. These apologists do not pretend indeed that the believers had escaped, as from Jerusalem of old, unscathed in the universal disaster; but they declared that the instrument of Divine vengeance, himself a believer though a heretic, had interfered stoutly for their protection. Assuredly Alaric respected the churches, and within their sacred walls the Christians found shelter and safety. The right of asylum was extended even to the Pagans who sought refuge at the altars of the Redeemer of mankind. Among the edifices which succumbed to the flames the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul escaped uninjured. Even the treasures of the sanctuary, with the furniture of plate and jewels, were preserved intact. On one occasion a furious plunderer was overawed by the sanctity of a helpless virgin, who placed the vessels she guarded under the protection of the Apostles. Another, who offered her life to preserve her honour, was led by the remorseful barbarian to the door of the church, and a gift of

gold forced upon her. Marcella, the aged friend of Jerome, was beaten to extort the treasures she was reputed to possess, but which she had actually expended in charity; and she too softened the heart of the oppressor, and was brought by his kindly hand to the common asylum, the church dedicated to the holy Paul.

It was well, perhaps, that Innocent the bishop was absent from the city at this crisis. He had betaken himself to Ravenna to implore assistance. His spiritual office gave him the first place in the confidence of his fellow-citizens. His courage or his sense of duty might have impelled him, had he been present, to protract a hopeless resistance.

The barbarian was soon satisfied with his easy triumph. He quitted Rome within twelve days; nor did he now trouble himself to impose any ruler or form of government upon its people. His followers were impatient for plunder elsewhere. Meanwhile, great numbers of all classes and of every persuasion fled beyond sea. Many Christians betook themselves to the opposite shores of Africa, where they were hospitably entertained by the flourishing communities of their fellow-believers. But complaint was made that they brought with them an

inveterate spirit of levity and worldliness; and the fugitives from the sack of Rome caused grave scandal in the bosom of a purer and simpler society. Alaric was soon cut off by sickness in Southern Italy, so often fatal to conquerors from beyond the Alps. After his death the great Gothic invasion ebbed backwards, and the Romans, in diminished numbers and abashed in spirit, returned to their homes. The Pagans were utterly cowed. They allowed their temples, the remnant of those which had not yet been actually closed, to remain empty or to fall into the hands of their opponents. The decrees, long issued but only partially enforced against them, acquired now a living authority. The vital powers of the ancient creeds seemed to collapse with the loss of property and position. The Christian priesthood grew rich on the resources of the Pagan endowments, and still more, perhaps, from the perennial offerings of the devout and charitable. The world in general bowed to their jubilant assertion, that the fall of Rome was the judgment of God upon the unbelieving world, and beheld in the greatest of secular calamities an overwhelming proof of the Gospel revelation.

The conquest of the city by Alaric in the year 410 may be emphatically designated as the 'Fall of

Rome,' although the ancient capital of civil society still survived, to be stormed and sacked twice again in the course of the sixty years that followed; nor was her secular ascendancy as the mistress of nations finally overthrown till the Western empire was dissolved by Odoacer in the year 476. It was the moral or religious lesson conveyed by the conquest of Alaric that really constituted the fall of Rome, for this conquest destroyed once for all the *idea* upon which the power of the ancient city had been long sustained. The pervading idea of the ancient world had been that Rome, the capital of the Empire, the metropolis of all secular culture, the focus of all secular energy, was the City of Man; the ultimate product of the ages of human life and progress. She was the heir of Thebes and Babylon, of Phœnicia and Etruria, of Carthage and Athens—'Time's greatest offspring was her last'—last and fairest; rerum pulcherrima Roma. Surely the new Rome, the mushroom city of Constantine, was a mere vulgar imitation, made to order, of this the true crown and glory of human existence. And so it was that the proud patriot Cicero had long before declared: 'A city, or commonwealth, should be so constituted as to last for ever. There is no natural dissolution

of a city as of a man, for whom death is always a necessity, sometimes a benefit. But when a city is overthrown, is extinguished, is annihilated, it is like as if (to compare small things with great) the whole world should be dissolved and perish.'

This was a sentiment which even the Christians had not failed to imbibe and appropriate. The Apologists of an earlier generation had accepted the imperial domination of the Great City as a principle of Divine government. The rule of Cæsar was to them a law of Providence. The world, in their view, was Pagan, unbelieving, idolatrous to the core; it stood in direct opposition to the society of Christians or the Church, to which belonged the promises of the future, but which had no part in the pride and glory of the present life. With this dispensation they were in the main content, nor did they look for any change in it. The ruler of the Pagan world, they deemed, must of necessity be a Pagan. They esteemed it to be his place in God's creation to represent the secular life as contrasted with the spiritual. It was his function to maintain the Empire, which secured the peace of mankind, and gave scope to the progress of Christian sentiment within it; and above all to maintain the grandeur

and solid strength of the imperial city, which was the appointed type of the Empire and of the world in general. Tertullian, in the third century, never imagined that a Cæsar could be converted to the Faith. Lactantius, in the fourth, would have shuddered at the idea of Rome ever ceasing to be the imperial ruler of the nations. Thoughtful Churchmen could not fail to see, even in the flourishing era of Constantine, that she was environed with awful perils, and to apprehend perhaps that her days were numbered; but beyond the fall of Rome they could see nothing, they could imagine no future upon earth. They were convinced that with the end of Rome would come the end of the world. As years went on, and these perils thickened, this was the idea which impressed itself most strongly upon the minds of the believers. Here at last the adherents of the rival persuasions were in accord. Both proclaimed that Rome was necessary to the world, and would last as long as the world lasted, and perish with it.

No doubt both Pagan and Christian were oppressed with sad misgivings, as they saw the swarms of barbarians closing around them, their emperors fled, their legions withdrawn and scattered. But the Pagans, for their part, still clung to their faith in

Rome herself, the nearest and dearest of all their divinities. Her career throughout had been plainly providential. Her gods had never failed her. Who but they had repulsed the Etruscans and the Gauls, and 'Antiochus, and the dreadful Hannibal'? All her defeats, all her disasters had redounded finally to her triumph, and her triumph had been extended over three continents, and prolonged through twelve centuries. From age to age oracles had pronounced her eternal; and her grandeur, her wealth, her inexhaustible resources were all manifest tokens of her immortality. Affronted as she was by the violence of a Constantine, the craft of a Theodosius, or the petulance of an Honorius, her people still rallied round her, loved her, believed in her. They raised their frantic appeal to the Powers which had so signally protected her, and refused to surrender the last faint hope of a triumphant interposition in her favour. But of this hope they required an outward and visible token. They had looked to Rome herself as the last pledge of their shattered creed. The fall of Rome extorted from their lips a wail of disappointment and dismay, such as has never been heard in the world before or since; but with the fall of Rome their creed was broken to atoms.

The Christians, on the other hand, while still expecting that the city and the world would perish together, could cherish other hopes and livelier consolations. They could not have the same passionate attachment to Rome, 'drunk with the blood of the saints,' as was natural to the Pagans. Nor indeed did their instincts point to the eternal duration of any monument of mere worldly greatness. From the first they were familiar with the expectation of an impending consummation of all things. The crisis had been long delayed: the Apostles had looked for it, but had not seen it: twelve generations had lived and died anticipating it; but the time was not yet. As the fall of Rome seemed more plainly approaching, this expectation had waxed keener than ever; though now, perhaps, as the outward condition of the Church was happier, the expectation was less joyous and sanguine than of yore. But the Christian could look beyond the ruin of the ancient city, even though the city and the world should be dissolved in one common destruction. He believed in 'another city, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' To the believer whose faith was firm and hearty, the vision of the new Jerusalem more than compensated for the impending dissolution of Rome.

But Rome was now sacked, ruined, discrowned, depopulated; yet the world did not perish. The people began to return and repair their desolate habitations. The ruin proved less overwhelming than in their despair they had imagined it. Though never again to be the queen of the nations, Rome might yet continue to be one of the greatest of provincial centres. Then it was that the Christians came boldly to the front, and Augustine put forth in his 'City of God' the manifesto, as we may call it, of the Church against the worship of the City of Man, by which the Pagans had been so fatally beguiled. In this elaborate treatise he first soothes the excitement of the Christian sufferers. While he mainly exonerates them from the guilt which has brought down this visitation upon a wicked world, he shows them how they too may regard it as a warning and a trial. He then reminds his Pagan brethren, by a review of their past history, how vain was their presumptuous assurance that Rome was protected by a special Providence; how often, how signally she had been afflicted by famine and pestilence, by foreign wars and by civil dissensions. Ancient as it was, the Empire of Rome had not yet attained the twelve hundred and sixty years of the

Assyrian Babylon; yet Babylon had not been immortal. And from thence he proceeds to invite all mankind to accept the revelation of the divine Scriptures, which declare that their true and eternal city is not Rome at all, is no material and visible structure, but the heavenly creation of the Divine Artificer—the spiritual commonwealth of which all the servants of God are citizens. For, in fact, all mankind form two rival commonwealths or cities: 'those who live after the flesh,' as does the natural man; and 'those who live after the Spirit,' that is, according to the law of God. The City of God or of Heaven is ever glorious, both in this world and in the next; the City of Man, on the contrary, swayed by the lust of power, is itself the slave of greed, even while it believes itself to be the mistress of the nations. The actual existence of this City of God is proved from the first by the long series of prophecies and miracles which ranges through all the Scripture history, declaring the operation of Divine providence; the victories and the defeats of the people of God equally attest His care of them, and the glorious end to which all things are tending together. Here is consolation, here is triumph, here is the *arcanum Imperii*, the secret of the divine

Empire. This remarkable treatise, whatever its defects of method and precision, strikes the key-note of all Christian Apologies in after time. The Pagans can make no reply. They have lost all heart and all faith and all hope. The tradition of their ancient superstitions, driven from the cities and resorts of the multitude, may still linger in the fields and villages. The last vestiges of their worship may still appear faintly and dubiously for centuries; nay, they have adhered, as we know, like parasites to the ceremonial of Christian churches, their origin forgotten or disguised from the common eye; but the old living creed of Jupiter and Saturn, of Bel and Mithras, has ceased to be a power in the world from this time for ever.

Yet, I say we must be circumspect and measure our words; we must not be too sanguine of the extinction of the natural instincts of Paganism, which will never wholly die out of human hearts, but will reappear again and again, with new names and under new conditions, even in the bosom of the true religion. Our task, a critical and a delicate task, must now be to examine the effect of this signal overthrow of Pagan creeds upon the profession of Christianity itself; and I must ask you to go back with me for a

few moments to an earlier period, and trace the tendencies of the Church which are now about to develope into bolder action.

From the day when Constantine first abandoned his ancient capital, Rome had gradually dwindled into a provincial city. The names of consuls and senate might still remain, but they were now titles only, no longer forces. The municipal affairs of the venerable burgh were conducted by a Prefect, a creature of the Emperor, in whose appointment the people had no voice or interest. For the most part they rendered obedience indeed to the officer thus set over them, for they were accustomed to obey; but their obedience, devoid of love or confidence, was never proof against the whim or passion of the moment, as they often made him feel. The Prefect of Rome sat at least upon a thorny eminence.

But the Bishop meanwhile had attained a far higher position than before. Constantine, on his first and only visit to the city in the middle of the fourth century, had required Liberius to join in the general proscription which the Arian party, then dominant in the East, had inflicted upon Athanasius. The orthodox believers were stronger at Rome, and their Bishop did not easily yield. When the

Emperor withdrew, he acted more boldly. He now received Athanasius with open arms, and defied the officer who was sent from the court to overawe him. A struggle ensued. Liberius was summoned to attend his master at Milan; his contumacy was punished, and he was banished into Thrace, the Siberia of the Romans. During his absence, the Emperor thrust a rival prelate into his see. The Christian people at Rome resented both the indignity to their old pastor, and the irregularity of the new appointment. Felix, the intruder, proved to be an Arian. The Church was all the more confirmed in its determination to resist. The faithful refused to enter their accustomed basilicas. The women, more impetuous than the men, came in long procession, like the Roman matrons of old, to remonstrate with the heretical tyrant. Constantius was surprised and attempted to compromise, declaring that Liberius and Felix should be bishops of Rome conjointly. 'Shall we have factions in the Church as well as in the circus?' rejoined the angry multitude. 'One God, one Christ, one Bishop!' was the universal cry among them. The Emperor, in his perplexity, released Liberius from captivity; and then left the question to settle itself, as over-sapient

advisers so often counsel us in similar cases to do. But the people would allow of no double sovereignty. When Felix attempted to perform episcopal functions in public, they broke into open riot. The baths and even the streets were deluged in blood. The factions of the old tribunes of the people were renewed. Eventually Felix fled, and left his rival in possession. But when Constantius held a council at Ariminum, in which the Arian tenets were substantially sanctioned, the Bishop of Rome kept prudently or proudly aloof, and Rome herself was not stained by any condescension to heresy: an exemption whereby her consideration in Christendom was, no doubt, highly exalted.

The consideration to which Rome had now attained as the Christian metropolis, was perhaps the more marked from the wide-spread indifference to religious creeds which could not fail to follow upon the protracted agitation of popular opinion on the subject. The soldiers of the apostate Julian, the same who had been content to attend their leader's daily sacrifices to Sol and Hercules, chose themselves a nominal Christian for their Imperator on his death, and allowed him to conduct their retreat under the Christian standard of the Labarum. Jovian, a care-

less soldier himself, accepted the ascendancy of the Christian Church; but he tolerated both heretics and Pagans. He restored Athanasius to his episcopal see, but he exercised no severity against the Arians. Rome he abandoned, during his short reign of a few months only, to the encroachments of the bishops as the popular favourites. These encroachments daily assumed a higher significance, to which the Pagans were constrained to submit, while they accepted in sullen silence the indulgence which Valentinian, the next of the Emperors, extended to their proscribed usages. The priesthoods of the Pagan cult were still occasionally assumed by persons of distinction; it appears that altars and shrines were still, recent edicts notwithstanding, erected here and there to the ancient divinities. The Emperor continued to affect the style of Sovereign Pontiff. The maintenance of these forms had perhaps little meaning. The vulgar are ever wont to retain a scruple at the omission of outward ceremonies, long after they have ceased to attach to them any intelligent belief. The real active belief of the age was fixed, in fact, as far as it was Pagan, upon sorcery and magic. I question whether the creed of Julian had any other positive basis than this.

But meanwhile the rigour of the ecclesiastical rule at Rome was making a great impression upon the mass of the people, who saw in it, if nothing more, at least a step towards the revival of the ancient popular prerogatives. On the death of Liberius in 366, the struggle for the succession again broke into popular violence and resulted in a sanguinary contest. It is not in the chronicles of the Church only that the fatal rivalry of Damasus and Ursicinus is emblazoned. The heathen historian of the period relates the incident in the same spirit with which Livy described so many ages before the civil strife of consuls and tribunes. The prize, says Ammianus, was magnificent: it conferred wealth and splendour; it secured the devotion of women of the highest rank; it placed the fortunate aspirant on the pinnacle of fashion as well as of luxury. The election was in the hands of the whole multitude of believers; but the rules by which it was conducted were perhaps but imperfectly determined. Each of the candidates claimed a legal victory; but in fact, the quarrel seems to have been decided by arms, and all accounts agree that so great was the tumult, so fierce and numerous the combatants on either side, that the Prefect confessed

himself unable to maintain the peace between them, and retired in confusion beyond the walls. The riot lasted apparently for several days, and spread from quarter to quarter. In one Christian church, and on a single day, as many as a hundred and sixty persons are reported to have lost their lives. But Damasus, it was maliciously said, was the favourite with the Roman ladies. He remained finally in possession, and has been recognised as the true bishop by ecclesiastical tradition.

Such then was the progress which the See of Rome was already making in the fourth century in the reverential regard of the Roman citizens. The same leading cause which had produced this critical revolution in popular sentiment continued to operate with increasing power as every year weakened their respect for the secular rule. The episcopal chair of Rome had become a prize for an ambition which could not always be confined to spiritual objects. The prelate of the most venerable of cities could henceforth hardly resist the temptation to encroach upon his fellow-bishops. The temporal fall of the Imperial metropolis tended to throw a brighter light upon her ecclesiastical claims. The separation of the East and the West had already enhanced the

religious dignity of the ancient capital. The great Eastern patriarchates of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem had up to that time all held themselves equal, if not superior to Rome. Constantinople had even assumed certain airs of supremacy over all. The General Councils which had defined the Faith at Nicæa and Constantinople had been composed almost wholly of Orientals. The great Doctors of the Church, the men who had defended or diffused the common Faith, had been mostly Greeks by origin and language. None had been Romans, and it was rarely, till the fourth century, that any one of them had written in the Latin tongue. When Athanasius, exiled from Alexandria, came to Italy and Gaul, it was three years before he could learn enough of the language of the West to address its congregations in public. But this curious fact shows that the Western Christians were now no longer the little Greek colony of the first and second centuries. Christianity had become the national religion of the native races. The Romans might now feel that they were becoming again a people; that their glorious career was assuming, as it were, a new point of departure. The Phœnix was actually rising from its ashes. No wonder then that the bishop of their own

choice, though held perhaps in little account beyond the Ægean or the Adriatic, reigned supreme in their veneration, inheriting as it were the inviolable majesty of the old tribune of the people, and gained more and more on the estimation of all the West. There was no Church in Gaul or Spain, none, except Rome, even in Italy, that could boast to have been founded by an Apostle; but Rome was under the protection not of one Apostle only, but of two. The most cultivated even of the Pagans still repaired to Rome as the capital of Western art and literature, and the rivalry of the two religions, supported on either side by all the eloquence, all the pomp and circumstance, which each could muster, gave a peculiar dignity of a novel kind to the spot on which the Old World and the New seemed to have met once for all for combat or for compromise. And there lay the question of questions, the solution of which could not long be delayed; should it be a combat, deadly, internecinal? or should it be a compromise, a transaction between them?

Let me ask you to consider more closely with me, what was the nature of the superior eminence which the Bishop of Rome was now holding in the city. Commanding as was the position which his

popular election gave him in the imagination of the people—of his people, as we may now call them—we must not suppose that the Emperor had actually conceded to him the appointment to civil offices, or the ordering of military affairs. No, the bishop's authority was still essentially spiritual; it consisted in the dominion over men's thoughts in religious matters; in the direction of their consciences. It was a government by sentiment; and, of course, as such it was limited on all sides. But the fact was—and there is no fact more important in estimating the character of the age before us—that the fifth century was eminently a period when the control of human affairs had fallen under the dictates of sentiment and opinion. Force had failed; military rule had collapsed; civilization, it was plain, could no longer look to maintain itself by arms against impending dissolution. But behind its broken ranks another power was forming itself and creeping without observation into the confidence of mankind. The head of the Church militant at Rome, militant against sins and idolatries, against spiritual ignorance and barbarism and all the horrors in their train, might be likened in the believer's imagination to an Imperator in the field, requiring implicit obedience

of the priests who regularly ministered in sacred things to the congregation placed under their care; of the flying squadrons of devotees and ascetics who made incursions into the ranks of the enemy; of the trained divines who engaged in duel with the select champions of the ancient philosophies, or undertook the conversion of the chiefs of the Pagan invaders. The organization of the Church was thus steadily advancing, with the consent and support of the multitude of believers. To Rome, as the centre of this efficient discipline, the eyes of the faithful were most constantly turned. The Bishop of Rome became more than an ordinary chief pastor of an ordinary flock; he was, in fact, promptly accepted as the commander of the whole spiritual armament; to use the phrase of a recent Cardinal, when he said to them, March, they marched. The conduct of the holy war, of the defence of Rome and therewith of all human culture, at least of such remnant as was left of them, was almost thrust into his hands. Hence it was that the title of Papa or Pope, derived from the East, where it was applied to the spiritual father of the people, was at this time voluntarily assigned him by the whole Latin Church, as a token of superior honour and authority. Such

spontaneous concessions on the part of the Church may have really outrun any conscious pretensions of the bishop himself. But Leo, dating from the year 440, may be regarded as the first of the Popes who contemplated a primacy of the Christian world. Doubtless this daring prelate did assume and enforce a special jurisdiction over the other neighbouring bishops, who were entitled the Suburbicarians, from their proximity to the Italian capital Doubtless, he fostered and took advantage of the disputes then so rife in the Eastern Church; he undertook the guidance and control of distant Councils; sometimes he made himself all the more conspicuous by his absence, when he claimed the right to direct them through his deputies. Yet even Leo, from whose reign the dogma of Papal supremacy must in fairness be dated, could still little anticipate the splendid destiny which awaited his successors. He put forth no historical claims to power or even to precedence; nor did he incur the mortification to which he would have been sometimes exposed, had he done so, from the rebuffs of other prelates not much less able nor much less proud than himself. Still, the fact remains that the great Leo, ambitious and imperious as we picture him, was merely floating in

triumph on a wave of popular sentiment, which was rising at the moment to demand a spiritual Cæsar to preside over the Empire of Christendom.

For at this moment the popular instinct could not fail to perceive how strongly the conscience of the barbarians had been affected by the spiritual majesty of Christian Rome. The Northern hordes had beaten down all armed resistance. They had made a deep impression upon the strength of the Eastern Empire; they had, for a moment at least, actually overcome the Western; they had overrun many of the fairest provinces, and had effected a permanent lodgment in Gaul and Spain, and still more recently in Africa. Yet in all these countries, rude as they still were, they had submitted to accept the creed of the Gospel. There was no such thing as a barbarian Paganism established within the limits of the Empire anywhere, except perhaps in furthest Britain. Such had been the power of Christian opinion. For, in fact, the barbarians had received their first impressions of the Faith before they settled down as conquerors within the limits of the Empire. They had known something of its missionary spirit, of its simple spirit of love and justice, before they found it seated in pomp and power by the side of

secular rulers. They found Rome, abandoned by her Cæsars and her legions, standing erect under the shield of her priests and bishop, who spoke to them of a God of peace and mercy. Never had such an appeal been made to the unsophisticated instincts of human nature. So deeply had the barbarian hosts been struck by the majesty of the Christian armaments, that they had yielded up their ancient superstitions, abandoned their unhallowed rites, burnt their abominable idols, devoted themselves to the singing of divine psalms, and the offering of the holiest sacrifice. True, the Goths, both of the East and the West, the Burgundians, the Sueves, the Vandals, had all, or most of them (perhaps the Burgundians should be excepted) embraced Christianity under the imperfect theory of the Arians; but, heretics though they were, they had imbibed enough of the spirit of the true Faith to lay down their arms at the gates of the Christian churches, to respect the sanctity of Christian Rome, and screen her from the worst of pillage. Was not the time now at hand when they might be taught to embrace the Faith in its integrity, and acknowledge as divine the authority of such a Cæsar as Leo?

The attitude of spiritual defiance which Rome

had assumed in the face of the barbarians, when she seemed to cast herself upon God and Christ as her protectors, upon the Apostles Peter and Paul as her patrons, upon her bishop or pope as the minister of the Divine government, constituted, we may readily suppose, a really effective bulwark. She continued for at least one generation free from further aggression. Of the Northern peoples who had so long threatened her, great multitudes had settled in the city and the provinces; they had generally accepted the Christian faith, and become absorbed into the mass of believers; they had accustomed the native races to regard the new-comers as friends rather than as enemies, while they had learnt themselves to look to the native races as their masters in culture and religion, rather than as objects of plunder. In the middle of the fifth century the Romans would have anticipated with less alarm a second attack by a second Alaric, connected as he would be with a great portion of their society by ties of blood as well as by common baptism. But in the middle of the fifth century the Roman world was suddenly threatened by another and a greater peril. The whole of central Europe was at the moment ravaged by the invasion of the Huns, a horde of more unmitigated ferocity

than any that had come before them, of brutal savages as well as heathens. The Goths, fierce as they were, had shown from the first that instinct of moral culture which they have transmitted to their descendants through so many generations; for the Goths of Alaric were generically the same as the Germans, the Scandinavians, the English of modern history. The Huns appertained to another race altogether: their character has been less distinctly marked; their descent through later ages less definitely traced; few modern peoples would thank us for ascribing to them a Hunnish ancestry; let us be content with saying vaguely, they were the Cossacks of the olden time. Now these Huns or Cossacks were overrunning the greater part of central Europe. Their progress had been everywhere marked by atrocities more signal than any that had been inflicted by the goodnatured though greedy Teutons; they had swallowed up everything, they had produced nothing. Defying all the influences of Southern creeds and civilization, they had proved themselves untamed and untameable, inhuman, and if it be permitted to any one of God's creatures to say so of another, anti-human. Attila, their leader, had vaunted himself as the Scourge of God; it was only

as the arbitrary wielder of a scourge that he recognised Deity at all; it was only under the form of a sword that he even pretended to worship Him. His fury was the more exasperated by the check he had received in the gallant defence of Orleans, and at the great battle of Châlons, which had liberated Gaul from his sweeping devastations, and hurled his reckless warriors in confusion across the Rhine. It was at Cologne, and apparently at this very period, that he executed the brutal massacre from which has sprung the legend, variously related, of the eleven thousand martyred virgins of Britain. It is a pretty story, known, no doubt, to many of my hearers, and worth the reading of all; but the germ of truth contained in it is but slender, though some truth there certainly is. I accept at least the investigation of it made by no less a critic than Cardinal Wiseman, who, seeking to maintain its substantial veracity, has, I allow, succeeded in showing that, on this very spot and at this very time, Attila put to the sword a great crowd of victims whom he had probably borne off with him from Gaul; but they were not eleven thousand in number, nor were they martyrs to the Faith, nor may they claim the honourable title of virgins; for they were an uncounted multitude of all

ages and either sex, as some existing remains are said still to demonstrate, who were slain not for their Christian Faith, but from mere lust of slaughter.

Such, however, was Attila, the Scourge of God; and such the trembling people of the South well knew him to be. It required no stretch of the imagination to depict him in the still darker colours of popular tradition. Repulsed from Gaul, he reappeared two years later, south of the Alps. Aetius, who had then baffled him, was now charged with the defence of Italy; but his forces were far away on the northern frontier. The Burgundians and Visigoths, who had aided him in the defence of Gaul, gave him no support at a distance from their own territories. The courtiers of the cowardly Emperor insinuated that he was a traitor, and the dubious charge has found a place in history; but in all periods of national disaster the first cry is, 'Treachery.' Aetius has not unfitly been designated 'the last of the Romans,' and we would not willingly lend an ear to such an imputation against his Roman virtue. There was, however, another Roman at hand, not unworthy of the crisis. Leo himself was a Roman; at least, he was a native of an Etruscan village a few miles from Rome. It was to Leo that the citizens

fortunately turned, in this their dire extremity, to save them, not by arms, but by prayers; not by the majesty of the Empire, but by the majesty of the Christian profession and priesthood. To Leo they had already turned on a former occasion, when their see had fallen vacant, and none but the Bishop of Rome, as they were assured, could reconcile the quarrel between two of their rival generals. Straightway the clergy, the senate, and the people, with one united voice, had then raised Leo, even in his absence, to the vacant seat; and the boldness and firmness with which he had in his high office combined the Churchman and the patriot, had inspired both Christians and Pagans with unbounded admiration and confidence. At the crisis now impending, while they deputed the prefect Trygetius and the consular Avienus to represent the secular government, they joined with these illustrious personages their chosen bishop, to complete their embassy, and stand between them and the heathen as the minister of God and the Church. The historians throw the prefect and the consular altogether into the shade, and give all the glory of the event to Leo, pope and bishop. To Leo they attribute the dismay of the barbarian, when he beheld the man of God appear

unarmed in his wild encampment, robed, as we may suppose from the remains found in after ages in his sepulchre, in broidered pall and purple chasuble, and the mitre on his head;[1] when he was reminded that the conqueror who had entered Rome before him had not survived his unholy triumph the space of one year. It was reported, and easily believed, that the Apostles Peter and Paul had appeared to Attila in a vision, and warned him to refrain from the attack. Whether he was loaded with presents by way of tribute—whether he received further assurance that the Emperor's sister, who had been formally betrothed to him, should be duly transmitted to his palace beyond the Danube—it remains at least on record that Attila, the Scourge of God, stayed his terrible career, and withdrew beyond the Alps. His sudden and mysterious death, so quickly following, marks an epoch in European history. The Huns, or Cossacks, have never again made themselves quite so formidable to civilized society.

[1] These particulars are certified by Thierry (*Hist. d'Attila*, ii. 210) from an ancient Life of the Saints:—'Erat indutus pontificalibus indumentis, scilicet planetâ sive casulâ latâ more antiquo, et purpurâ coloris castanei. . . . Super humero dextro crux parva rubri coloris quæ erat pallii pontificalis, et aliam crucem paulo longiorem ejusdem pallii supra pectus. . . . Telle

It was not only as a great ruler and administrator of the Church, as one whose abilities fully answered to his opportunities for the foundation of an aggressive ecclesiastical supremacy, that Leo holds the most prominent place in his generation of Churchmen. The name of this pontiff is associated also with all the leading polemics of the day. The determination of the Church Councils in the matters of Nestorius and Eutyches seems to have been mainly influenced by his authority; it was to his decision at least that the leaders of the Eastern Church were too easily induced to submit their own irreconcilable differences, to many of which Western orthodoxy was generally indifferent. Under his influence the Roman See was permitted to assume the spiritual presidency of a general council; all its acts had run in the name of 'Leo, Bishop of the Universal Church,' or 'Leo, the blessed and universal Patriarch of the great city of Rome.' Nevertheless, the apostolic See

est la description des vêtemens pontificaux avec lesquels saint Léon fut enseveli, et qu'on trouva dans sa tombe lors de la translation de ses reliques. On en peut voir tout le détail dans les Bollandistes à la date du 11 avril. Nous devons à ce procès-verbal de translation d'avoir pu décrire le costume que portait saint Léon à l'audience d'Attila, puisque c'étaient là ses habits pontificaux, et que son biographe nous dit qu'il aborda le roi des Huns en costume pontifical, *augustiore habitu.*'

of Rome had not been able to reduce Constantinople to the level of other non-apostolic chairs. The Eastern prelates, after the fashion of the East, were willing to use complimentary language, such as might convey to the West ideas which they did not practically accept themselves. The court language of Constantinople bore a different significance among the subtle Greeks from what it seemed to imply to the simpler and more straightforward Romans. But in fact, both parties might be conscious of this difference, and count upon taking their own advantage of it. The progress of the Papacy in the West was liable to no possible misconception. Leo wrested by main force, it may be said, the primacy of Gaul from Hilary, the Archbishop of Arles, and cut off that distinguished prelate himself from communion with Rome; 'inasmuch,' so he said, 'as he refuseth to be any longer subject to the blessed Peter.' He prevailed on the feeble Emperor, Valentinian III., to condemn his opponent as a traitor, in an edict in which 'the whole world' was required to acknowledge 'the Roman See as its director and governor,' and which further decreed that henceforth not only 'no Gallic bishops, but no bishop of any other pro-

vince, be permitted, *in contradiction to ancient custom*, to do anything without the authority of the venerable pope of the eternal city.'[1]

But, to pass over subjects hardly suitable to our hasty historical sketch, I will only refer to the sermons which this great divine addressed to his own peculiar flock at Rome, to help us in forming an

[1] Mr. Greenwood, who refers to this edict in the *Codex Theodosianus*, remarks upon it in very considerate terms :—

'Both Leo the Pontiff and Hilary the Archbishop belonged to that noble company of combatants for religion and virtue that often springs up, as it were, from the earth, when vice and corruption appear triumphant in the world. But they fought in the same cause with different weapons: Hilary wielded the "sword of the spirit," in preference to that of the flesh; Leo believed himself justified in using either, as occasion might require. Both desired "to live in unity and godly love with the brethren." But Hilary grounded his hope of success upon the maintenance of the Christian law; Leo upon the acquisition of extrinsic power to suppress and punish disobedience. Such opposite views of the conditions of Christian fellowship could never meet but in conflict with each other. But Hilary had the advantage of his adversary, for he could forgive; to the other nothing was gained till he extorted an absolute surrender to the Petrine claims. To this Hilary could not consent, and he died at the early age of forty-eight, out of the communion of Rome, but out of no other. His admirable brethren took little heed of the frowns of Rome: they continued in intercourse with him; the privileges of his metropolitan church remained unimpaired; and the name of Hilary of Arles figures to this day in the Roman calendar by the side of that of his canonized opponent.'—*Cathedra Petri*, i. 355.

idea of the state of Christian sentiment which prevailed in the period now before us.[1] The bishops of Constantinople and other Eastern cities had overflowed in popular discourses, but the prelates of the West seem, for whatever reason, to have been far more reticent. Leo is the first of the Roman pontiffs whose addresses from the pulpit have

[1] I allow myself the pleasure of presenting the reader with the fine sketch of Leo's character given by Milman, *Hist. of Latin Church*, bk. ii. ch. iv.:—

'Leo was a Roman in sentiment as in birth. All that survived of Rome, of her unbounded ambition, her inflexible perseverance, her dignity in defeat, her haughtiness of language, her belief in her own eternity and in her indefeasible title to universal dominion, her respect for traditionary and written law, and of unchangeable custom, might seem concentred in him alone. The union of the Churchman and the Roman is singularly displayed in his sermon on the day of St. Peter and St. Paul; their conjoint authority was that double title to obedience on which he built his claim to power, but chiefly as the successor of St. Peter, for whom he asserted a proto-Apostolic dignity. From Peter and through Peter all the other Apostles derived their power. Nor less did he assert the destined perpetuity of Rome, who had only obtained her temporal autocracy to prepare the way, and as a guarantee for her greater spiritual supremacy. . . . . Pagan Rome had been the head of the heathen world; the empire of her divine religion was to transcend that of her worldly dominion. . . . . It was because Rome was the capital of the world, that the chief of the Apostles was chosen to be her teacher, in order that from the head of the world the light of truth might be revealed over all the earth.'

descended to posterity. Of these sermons indeed there remain to us more than a hundred in number. They dwell, some on the primacy of St. Peter and the supremacy of the Roman See, some on the mystery of our Lord's nativity and His divine nature, some on the lessons of humility and obedience inculcated by His holy life; nor are they silent on the redemption of man through His death and passion, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.[1] But they are especially urgent on the merits of charity and fasting. There are few of them that do not glance at least on one or both of these favourite graces, while they are plainly defective in the grounds on which, at least by implication, they place them. For they enjoin them simply as formal observances due to the command of God Himself, with little or no reference to any duty to one's own moral nature or to one's neighbours' happiness, to the duty of personal self-control, or of compassion for our fellow creatures; with little or none throughout to the practical lesson

[1] In the treatise *De Vocatione Omnium Gentium* Leo enforces very fully and elaborately the Augustinian doctrines of Grace and Freewill, and is sorely exercised in explaining the condemnation of unbaptized infants:—'Verumtamen de hac altitudine discretionis Dei non conturbabitur cor humilitatis nostræ, si firmâ ac stabili fide omne judicium Dei esse justum credamus.' —ii. 21.

of our blessed Lord's example, who 'went about doing good,'[1] or to the Divine process by which fallen man is justified and reconciled to his Creator. Such, to my apprehension, is the moral defect of St. Leo's teaching which I am bound to notice, at the same time that I remark its comparative freedom from the errors which we associate with so much of the teaching of the fifth century.

But I have a further and a special object in making this remark. It will be admitted, I trust, without entering upon disquisitions which would be inappropriate to this occasion, that the corruptions of Christian faith against which our own national Church and many others rose indignantly at the Reformation had for the most part struck their foundations deep in the course of the fifth century; that though they had sprung up even from an earlier period, and though they developed more in some directions, and assumed more fixity, in the darker times that followed, yet the working of the true

[1] The common defect of excessive self-introspection appears strikingly in the popular treatise on the 'Imitation of Christ,' in which there is no reference whatever to our Lord's example of active benevolence in going about doing good. 'Multum facit qui multum diligit' is the sum of all the author has to say de operibus ex caritate factis. See Thomas à Kempis, *De Imit. Christ.*, lib. i. c. 15.

Christian leaven among the masses was never more faint, the approximation of Christian usage to the manners and customs of Paganism never really closer, than in the age of which we are now speaking. We have before us many significant examples of the facility with which the most intelligent of the Pagans accepted the outward rite of Christian baptism, and made a nominal profession of the Faith, while they retained and openly practised, without rebuke, without remark, with the indulgence even of genuine believers, the rites and usages of the Paganism they pretended to have abjured. We find abundant records of the fact that personages high in office, such as consuls and other magistrates, while administering the laws by which the old idolatries were proscribed, actually performed Pagan rites and even erected public statues to Pagan divinities. Still more did men, high in the respect of their fellow-Christians, allow themselves to cherish sentiments utterly at variance with the definitions of the Church. Take the instance of the illustrious bishop Synesius. Was he a Christian, was he a Pagan, who shall say? He was famous in the schools of Alexandria as a man of letters, a teacher of the ancient philosophies, an admirer of the Pagan Hypatia. The

Christian people of Ptolemais, enchanted with his talents, demand him for their bishop. He protests—not indeed that he is an unbeliever—but that his life and habits are not suitable to so high an office. He has a wife whom he cannot abandon, as the manners of the age might require of him; whom he will not consort with secretly, as the manners of the age would, it seems, allow. 'But further, I cannot believe,' he adds, 'that the human soul has been breathed into flesh and blood; I will not teach that this everlasting world of matter is destined to annihilation; the resurrection, as taught by the Church, seems to me a doubtful and questionable doctrine. I am a philosopher, and cannot preach to the people popularly.' In short, he maintains to all appearance, that if he is a believer in Jesus Christ he is a follower of Plato; and such doubtless were many others. The people leave him his wife and his opinions, and insist that he shall be their bishop. He retains his family ties, his philosophy, his Platonism, his rationalism, and accepts the government of the Church notwithstanding. Again we ask, was Synesius a Christian or a Pagan? The instance of such a bishop, one probably among many, is specially significant; but the same question arises with regard to

other men of eminence of the period. Was Boethius, a century later, the imitator of Cicero, Christian or Pagan? Was Simplicius, the commentator on Plato? Was Ausonius, the playful poet and amiable friend of the bishop Paulinus, who celebrates Christ in one poem, and scatters his allusions to Pagan mythology indiscriminately in many others? We know that Libanius, the intimate friend and correspondent of Basil, was a Pagan of the Pagans; but he did not on that account forfeit the confidence of a sainted father of the Christian Church. So indifferent as Christians seem to have been at this period to their own creed, so indifferent to the creed of their friends and associates, we cannot wonder if it has left us few or but slight traces of a vital belief in the principles of Divine redemption.

We must make indeed large allowance for the intellectual trials of an age of transition, when it was not given to every one to see his way between the demands urged upon an intelligent faith by the traditions of a brilliant past on the one hand, and the intimations of an obscure and not a cheerful future on the other. We hardly realize, perhaps, the pride with which the schools of Athens and Alexandria still regarded their thousand years of

academic renown, while the Christian Church was slowly building up the recent theological systems on which its own foundations were to be secured for the ages to follow. We need not complain of Leo and other Christian Doctors, if they shrank, as I think they did, from rushing again into polemics with the remnant of the philosophers, whose day, they might think, was sure to close at no distant date. But the real corruption of the age was shown in the unstinted adoption of Pagan usages in the ceremonial of the Christian Church, with all the baneful effects they could not fail to produce on the spiritual training of the people. There are not wanting indeed passages in the popular teaching of St. Leo, in which he beats the air with angry denunciations of auguries and sortilege and magic, stigmatizes idolatry as the worship of demons, and the devil as the father of Pagan lies.[1] But neither Leo, nor, I think, the con-

[1] In his 26th Sermon the Pontiff formally reproves the 'impiety,' then common, of turning and bowing to the East as the quarter in which the sun rises. 'Nonnulli etiam Christiani adeo se religiose facere putant, ut priusquam ad B. Petri Apostoli Basilicam, quæ uni Deo vivo et vero est dedicata, perveniant, superatis gradibus, quibus ad suggestum aræ superioris ascenditur, converso corpore ad nascentem se Solem reflectant, et curvatis cervicibus in honorem se splendidi orbis inclinent.' The altar at St. Peter's was then, we must suppose, as now, at the western end of the church.

temporary Doctors of the Church, seem to have had an adequate sense of the process by which the whole essence of Paganism was, throughout their age, constantly percolating the ritual of the Church and the hearts of the Christian multitude. It is not to these that we can look for a warning that the fasts prescribed by the Church had their parallel in the abstinence imposed by certain Pagan creeds, and required to be guarded and explained to the people in their true Christian significance; that the Monachism they extolled so warmly, and which spread so rapidly, was in its origin a purely Pagan institution, common to the religions of India, Thibet, and Syria, with much, no doubt, to excuse its extravagance in the hapless condition of human life at the period, but with little or nothing to justify it in the charters of our Christian belief; that the canonizing of saints and martyrs, the honours paid them and the trust reposed in them, were simply a revival of the old Pagan mythologies; that the multiplication of formal ceremonies, with processions and lights and incense and vestments, with images and pictures and votive offerings, was a mere Pagan appeal to the senses, such as can never fail to enervate man's moral fibre; that, in short, the general aspect of Christian

devotion, as it met the eye of the observer, was a faint and rather frivolous imitation of the old Pagan ritual, the object of which from first to last was not to instruct, or elevate man's nature, but simply to charm away the ills of life by adorning and beautifying his present existence.

Surely, we must complain that all this manifest evil was not denounced at the time by the teachers of the Christian Church—nay, that it was rather fostered and favoured by them. But we may detect perhaps the instinctive feeling which blinded the uninstructed people, and clouded the keener sense even of their rulers. Fallen as she was from her high estate, as a temporal sovereign, the Empire might still be regarded as the last retreat of ancient civilization, the last depository of the world's intellectual and æsthetic treasures. Much as she had lost of power, of wealth, of brilliancy, of influence and authority—though her gold had become dim, and the glory of her towers and temples covered with dust and disgraced with smoke,—yet she seemed to hold on by the skirts to the Divine protection, which overawed the powers of the world, and turned the barbarian assailants into admirers and worshippers. The Goths had crossed the Alps and Apennines breathing

fire and slaughter against her, but the Goths had accepted her humaner teaching, had filtered into the mass of her population, and given it courage to baffle the Huns, the Avars, and the Alans. These, too, might in turn be expected to succumb to her enlightening influence. For Rome still called herself the Eternal City, and so we find her still designated even by Christian preachers of the fifth century. Under Leo she spoke more confidently than ever, as one having spiritual authority. And so the instinct of the Imperial people now urged them to throw a veil over all they had lost of brilliancy and glory, and to save at least the little that remained. They looked to the present only; they averted their eyes from the future. The Christian Church, falling in with this popular feeling, clutched at the remains of the earlier culture, and ignored, as it would seem, all further development of its powers. The creeds of antiquity, as you will have observed, never looked forward. They all began with the vision of a Golden Age, from which every step in advance was only a step downwards. The progress of truth and righteousness, the preparation of man from age to age for a higher state of being, formed no part of the creeds of Paganism. They formed no

part of the aspirations even of the philosophers. Even an Epicurus and a Lucretius, those ultra-Darwinians, who held that man sprang from earth and stones, 'Tellus quem dura crearat,' asserted with a sigh that his moral growth had soon reached its height, and could henceforth only dwindle. Nothing remained for the Pagan but to acquiesce in this hopeless condition, and preserve while he could the position he had for the moment attained. And so sadly were the Christians of the fifth century paganized, so thoroughly had they imbibed the ruling sentiment of the masses around them, that they too looked now no further than the present, imagined no progress, no development, no extension of the knowledge of Christ, beyond the narrow horizon that lay around them. They were content that the limits of Christian empire should remain stationary, while the spirit of Christian belief was actually declining among them. For so it must always be: if the Gospel ceases at any time to be an advancing power in the world, an aggressive power upon the frontier of darkness and unbelief, it will assuredly decline in force and vitality, its salt will have lost its savour. But, as I cannot but think, even the leaders of the Church were at this period blind to this condition of

its being. They made no advance beyond the borders of the Roman world; they made no aggression upon the blank domains of barbarism in the distance. They sought to maintain the actual order of affairs without regard to the future. Nay, they averted their eyes, and shrank from looking to the future. They were afraid of any spiritual movement which should extend the limits of their dark outlook. They scouted the more spiritual reformers of the age, whom God will never suffer to be altogether wanting in His Church, and branded them as heretics, while they suppressed the testimony of their teaching. Their cry was still, Save what remains of society, what remains of civilization, what remains of moral and religious culture. Make friends with the votaries even of the worser creeds. Close your ranks, all ye peoples, shoulder to shoulder, to keep off at least the barbarians who will root out the faith of us all. Enough for the day is the evil thereof!—Such, I imagine, was the hysterical cry which went forth from the multitude, half Christian half Pagan, who met together in those unhappy days to confuse the Feast of the Nativity with the Feast of the Saturnalia, the Feast of the Purification with the Feast of the Lupercalia, the Feast of

Rogations with the Feast of the Ambarvalia; to instal saints and martyrs in the temples of demi-gods; to place the long-cherished shrines of Ceres, Minerva, even of Venus, under the invocation of the Mother of Jesus. Such was the compromise now unconsciously effected between the Old world and the New; such the unhappy influence of ideas and fancies which had survived a positive conviction.

Paganism was assimilated, not extirpated, and Christendom has suffered from it more or less ever since; but she had brighter days at hand already: and if you will indulge me with listening to another lecture, I hope at our next meeting to open to you a more cheerful stage in her progress.

LECTURE IV.

ST. GREGORY AND THE EARLY MISSIONS OF THE CHURCH.

In my last lecture I drew a sketch of the Church in the fifth century, in which I represented it as shrinking from its office as the converter of the nations, and confining itself ignobly to the maintenance of the remnant of social and spiritual culture which had thus far survived the attacks of the barbarian and the decline of the ancient civilization. With this special object before it, I pourtrayed it as content to make terms with what survived of Paganism, content to lose even more than it gained in an unholy alliance with superstition and idolatry; enticing, no doubt, many of the vulgar, and some even of the more intelligent, to a nominal acceptance of the Christian Faith, but conniving at the surrender by the great mass of its own baptized members of the highest and purest of their spiritual acquisitions. I seemed to trace this unhappy compliance

to a fond but recreant hope of averting the utter ruin of all religion under the assaults of the northern barbarians, whose advancing tribes threatened to be even fiercer and more exterminating than those who had come before them. The Huns, it was feared, would be more terrible than the Goths; the Avars and the Lombards loomed in the distance, not less terrible than the Huns. Meanwhile the great Leo, as the founder of the Roman Papacy, had exercised the talents of a profound statesman, in ordering and training the Church as a spiritual militia for the defence of social order. He had created a new Roman people, with a sense of brotherhood and mutual sympathy akin to the ancient patriotism; by collecting the Church into his own hands he had consolidated its powers of resistance, and imbued it with a certain pride and confidence in itself and in its leader, which constituted it already a strong material force for the government of the world around it. While the Church of the fifth century, in my view, grievously betrayed its trust in one direction, I do not the less clearly see how much it improved the talent committed to its use in another.

It was the work of Providence; and the designs of the great Governor of the Church, condescending

to human infirmity in its common admixture of good with evil, seem to admit of being reverentially traced in proceeding, as I would now invite you to proceed, further.

I have spoken broadly of the age of Leo as the fifth century, for convenience' sake; but it will be well to remind you that the actual work and direct influence of the great Pontiff are confined properly to the middle period of that century only. In 451 he repulsed Attila, but in 458 Rome was actually taken and sacked by the Vandals under Genseric, whom Leo could only soothe and propitiate. Leo himself died in 461; and Rome was a third time taken, by the German Ricimer, ten years later. With the fall of Augustulus and the establishment of a barbarian kingdom by Odoacer in 476, the Roman Empire in the West was finally dissolved; the throne, which had been at least nominally reserved for an Emperor of Roman blood, was now for the first time occupied by a barbarian and a stranger under the alien title of a *king*; the constitution of civil society was surrendered bodily to the northern conquerors, barbarians themselves or at best the children of barbarians, Pagans themselves or the children of Pagans, who had acquired little

more than the outward varnish of southern culture, and of the religion which now represented it. We may regard the old classical Paganism as, to the outward eye, almost utterly extinguished, while we bear in mind that the spirit of the old traditions had become to a great extent merged in the popular Christianity, and actually assimilated to it.

For myself, I cannot but think that vital Christianity, spiritual Christianity, the sense of sin and of the appointed means of recovery from sin, had become cold and numb, all but dead, at this critical period throughout the Church. We can only speak of the Church as we read of it in the mass; God knows who are His own, and He sees, no doubt, at all times the many or the few who are believers in heart and soul, however little they may make themselves visible to the world at large. There was indeed one spark of common life in the Church which showed itself conspicuously enough even at this unhappy period, and no doubt worked its appointed way in the destined development of the Faith. The fifth century was eminently active in the convening of ecclesiastical Synods for the definition of doctrine. During its course many dogmatic points of interest and importance were finally determined by the com-

mon voice of Christendom. The age of the great Trinitarian controversy was fitly succeeded by the age of the Monophysite and the Monothelite. The doctrine of the unity of the Divine substance in the Father and the Son was completed by the judgments which affirmed the unity of the Divine nature and the unity of the Divine will. These and other questions had doubtless demanded a final solution, to bring Christians to a common understanding in regard to them. To the fifth century we owe the determination of these points; and we acknowledge with thankfulness that the fifth century, with all its shortcomings, did retain the spark of life which has imparted a substantial power to its dogmatic decisions. We may regret indeed that this spark of life was also manifested in its repression of such practical reformers as an Aerius, a Jovinian, a Vigilantius may probably have been, and in the honour lavished upon its own impetuous and overbearing champions. We may bear not without some impatience the signs of ecclesiastical vigour which we recognise in the silence imposed upon Vigilantius, and the canonization of his opponent Jerome.

But if the Church might seem throughout the fifth century to lie almost dormant under the bonds

of its spiritual winter, the outburst of a new spring-tide of active and fertile growth was being prepared for it in silence. The germ of this renovated vigour was planted in the Monastic and Cenobitic systems, which took such deep root in the fourth and were not wholly unknown in the third century. You will distinguish between the monastic or recluse life of the anchorite or hermit—who fled from the world to devote himself in entire seclusion to communion with God and Him only—and the cenobitic, the conventual or common life of a number of individuals living together indeed, but separate from the outer world. We can easily understand and appreciate the motives which first drove men of warm and tender feelings to renounce the society of the harsh, the selfish, the brutish, who in an age of rude corruption surrounded and harassed them. The Church was compassed in on every side by external perils from the violence of man; she was distressed and her action everywhere impeded by the perils engendered by sin everywhere abounding. It was an age well fitted to breed enthusiasts and visionaries, and it did breed them on every side, not less among the Pagans than the Christians. Julian was not less a fanatic than Jerome. Reverse the position of the

two men, both great men in their way, and 'the same adust complexion' would have made a hermit of the Emperor, a tyrant—perhaps a blasphemer—of the Saint. The priests and mystagogues of Isis and Mithras were visionaries essentially of the same type as a Saint Anthony and a Symeon of the Pillar. The vulgar marvels of our modern spiritualism and clairvoyance, as it is called, are simply a reproduction of the pretensions of the heathen wonder-workers, and can be paralleled riddle for riddle by them.[1] The precipitation with which the Christians of the same age—and, alas! alas! Augustine among the rest—accepted every tale of miracle and vision that was palmed upon them, shows how widely spread was the credulity of the age, how the perils and trials

[1] 'Magicians and wizards, chiefly natives of Egypt . . . . pretended to expel demons from the possessed, to blow diseases away, to summon the souls of heroes, and make tables appear spread with sumptuous repasts, and figures of animals move as animated . . . . Magician philosophers had their mysteries, into which their pupils were initiated step by step, till they reached the contemplation of the gods manifesting themselves in a variety of forms, chiefly human, but not unfrequently too in formless light only. Probably this did not mean a mere scenic phantasmagoria, but an artificial state akin to magnetic clairvoyance, in which people found themselves surrounded with light, like that of the Byzantine navel-inspectors of the fourth century.'—Döllinger (*Gentile and Jew*, ii. 214), from Proclus, Celsus, and other ancient authorities.

to which it was subjected had overwrought its brain and weakened its nerves.[1]

[1] St. Augustine, in his belief in dreams and visions (*Civ. Dei*, xxii. 8), reminds us curiously of Wesley. The fallacies of human credulity at this period are exposed by Döllinger (*G. and J.* ii. 199 foll.):—

'We are acquainted with a few of the numerous expedients most frequently employed in making gods, demons, and the dead, who had to be conjured up, appear. The believer was bid to look into a stone basin filled with water, which had a glass bottom, and stood over an opening in the floor. The imaginary god was found below, or a figure was traced on the wall, which was smeared over with a combustible composition. During the *evocatio* a lamp was imperceptibly brought close to the wall, so as to set fire to the material, and a fiery demon exhibited to the astonished believers. The apparition of Hecate was specially efficacious. Believers were told to throw themselves prostrate at the first sight of fire. The goddess of the crossways and roads, the Gorgo or Mormo wandering among the graves at night, was then invoked in verse, after which a heron or vulture was let loose, with lighted tow attached to the feet, the flame of which, frightening the bird, it flew wildly about the room. . . . . Similar artifices were employed to make the moon and stars appear on the ceiling of a room, and to produce the effects of an earthquake. To make an inscription show itself on the liver of a victim, the haruspex wrote the words previously with sympathetic ink on the palm of his hand, which he kept pressed on the liver long enough to leave the impression. So the Neo-Platonists contrived to cheat the Emperor Julian, and Maximus caused him to see an apparition of fire in the temple of Hecate. . . . . The 'Pneumatica' of Heron abound in this kind of lore. Here you have instructions how to build a temple so that, on the kindling of the fire on the altar, the doors open spontaneously . . . . by lighting a fire on an altar to contrive that two figures at the side should pour a libation upon it,' &c. &c. To these

The delusions of the Anchorites are notorious, and are generally acknowledged by candid writers even of the Medieval or Romish schools. Great excuse may be alleged for the devotees who at such a season of general misery—with such imminent prospects of worse evils of all kinds, with such fervent aspirations for their Lord's second coming, and assurance that He could not long delay it—abandoned the world and all its duties to secure, as they imagined, their own souls' safety. But it was a selfish policy at best; and I hardly suppose that any one, on calmly reviewing it, can think that Christian society gained anything by the countenance it lent to it. The best that can be said for it is, that it left here and there an example of fortitude and self-control, to show mankind the real strength of human nature. It might encourage wiser men to a wiser application of the deep resources of love and zeal with which God has endowed His creatures, if they have but the sense to employ them rightly. But the case of the Cenobites, of the devotees who retired from

and kindred artifices, adds the writer (with a glance at our animal magnetism or so-called spiritualism), there is a great deal that is similar even among the phenomena of more modern times.

life in public to seek God in a private community —cultivating some sympathy with their fellows, cherishing principles of discipline and obedience, occupying themselves with labour both of mind and body, studying, digging, writing, preaching—the case of the Cenobites was very different. We may deplore their precipitation in quitting the world, and the common ties of society which good men might do so much to leaven; we may discredit the superstitious mortifications which they imposed on themselves; we may think that the rules of celibacy, of poverty, even of mendicancy, which they enforced, were more adapted to foster self-exaltation than self-abasement; we may trace in the repeated failure and decline of the efforts so repeatedly made to reform and reinforce their system, the inevitable law by which an unnatural mode of existence is doomed to decay and perish, and never lives out half its years; but we may acknowledge that the common or conventual life became a powerful instrument in the hands of Divine wisdom for working out in its due season a happy transformation in the position of the Church.

The effect of the conventual system was to implant in the minds of Churchmen a new and signi-

ficant sense of their duty, as the apostles or missionaries of the Lord Jesus. We have marked the fifth century as a period of despair and languor throughout the Christian community, when the idea of advancing the bounds of Christianity, once so rife and effectual, was tacitly abandoned. For the supineness in this particular of the Church under Leo some pleas may, no doubt, be urged. First of these perhaps was the imminent danger to the Faith at Rome itself, if the barbarians, who had already entered within the bounds of the Empire and hovered over Italy, should be allowed to become its masters without being first caught in the net of the Gospel. While this portentous issue was yet undecided, the preachers of Christianity, it may be said, could not afford to go further afield in search of more remote barbarians to convert. Leo himself, it may be added, was too fully occupied with the consolidation of Church authority according to his own engrossing ideas, to extend his views and multiply his anxieties elsewhere. But there is assuredly something singular in his apparent blindness to the future prospects of the Church of Christ, which lives, according to Christ's own words, by a process of constant extension. Leo wrote a treatise on the 'Calling of all

Nations.' He was fully impressed with the truth of the divine declaration, that 'God willed that all men should be saved.' He assures us that the Church, in performance of her bounden duty, 'prays to God everywhere not only for the Saints and the regenerate in Christ, but also for all unbelievers and enemies of the Cross of Christ, for all worshippers of idols, for Jews, heretics, and schismatics.' It prays that they may be converted to God, accept the Faith, and become delivered from the darkness of ignorance. The Church in his view is bound to pray that the nations may come to Christ, but he says not a word of the Church going to them, calling to them, and bringing them. As the nations come to Rome, he seems to say, so let them come of their own will to God. He prays that they may do so; but as Rome has ceased to go forth and subdue the nations to her sway, so it seems not to occur to him that the Church should go forth, and conquer the children of unbelief in their own lands. As the Parthians, the Medes, and the Elamites 'flowed together' to receive the saving truth from the Apostles, so he would invite the Goths, and Germans, and Scythians to accept the faith from Rome, and let it bear fruit in their own homes hereafter as God pleases. His whole

treatise on the calling of the Gentiles is devoted to explaining and elaborating the doctrine of Grace and Freewill, and showing how the scheme of Redemption which he has founded upon the teaching of Augustine may be reconciled with the will of God that all men should be saved. But on the overthrow of the Western Empire, and the demonstration, rendered manifest to all, that with the complete triumph of the new world of secular polities a new spiritual development, a new phase of Divine guidance, was opening, the conscience of the believers was aroused to a sense of the sinfulness of their cowardly inactivity. 'Go ye into all nations, and baptize them,' had been the last words of their blessed Master. How long had they cowered behind the outworks of a narrow civilization, and refused even to stretch forth a hand to the unnumbered multitudes beyond it! How long had they shrunk in fear and horror from contact with the mass of their fellow-creatures, all gifted with immortal souls, all subjects of the same law of love which Christ had imposed on His disciples as His greatest commandment! Thereupon a new spirit seemed suddenly to awaken among them—the missionary spirit; a *new* spirit, we may at this period justly call it, for

the original impulse which had urged the first Christians over land and sea in quest of proselytes, had been checked or paralysed among the believers for two or more centuries. It is to this new or revived missionary spirit which distinguished the sixth century, of which I would place Pope Gregory the First, or the Great, as the central figure, that I desire now to introduce you. Remember that the Empire, which had represented the unity of mankind, had become disintegrated and broken into fragments. Men were no longer Romans, but Goths and Sueves, Burgundians and Vandals, and beyond them Huns, Avars, Franks, and Lombards, some with a slight tincture of Christian teaching, but most with none; but were they not all God's children, all alike bound in sin? Had not Christ died for all? Let but the Gospel be proclaimed to all, and leave the issue in God's hands! Such was the contrast between the age of Leo and the age of Gregory! between the era of despair in the Church, of narrow views and faint aspirations, and the era of hopefulness, activity, and vigour! It was as when the prison doors were opened and Peter came forth into the streets.

Few men have done so great a work in the world

as Benedict of Nursia, the founder of the convent of mount Cassino, the founder of the Benedictine order of monks, which from the first took the largest share in breeding apostles for the Gentiles, and fostering the spirit of apostolic activity. But the impulse of which I have spoken may be traced more particularly to the career of Severinus, the apostle, as he is called, of Bavaria. The origin and birthplace of this holy preacher, the first of the medieval missionaries, is not precisely known. He is supposed to have come from the East, and we are allowed to believe that he had been an inmate of some convent in Asia, where his mind had first opened to the claims of the distant heathens to his devout solicitude. With a bold and vigorous effort he threw aside the contemplative life to which he had originally surrendered himself. His love for others prevailed over his love for himself; perhaps, if his heart was still more keenly touched, he might feel that Christian love is twice blest; it blesseth him that gives as well as him that takes of it. So it was that Severinus engaged himself throughout a mission of thirty years in the work of converting the barbarians on the Danube, the Save, and the Iser; barbarians most of whom had never heard the name of Christ

of whom a few only had imbibed at best some corrupt and imperfect notions of His message of Love and Peace; barbarians as rude and restless as any that had hitherto scared mankind from their propriety, but on whose simple hearts he exercised a soothing influence, attested by its permanent effects as well as by the recorded incidents of his story. He succeeded in bringing many of their chiefs to baptism; he effected the liberation of multitudes of captives, the preservation of some cities; he attached to himself a body of zealous assistants, and planted them in divers localities. It is affirmed of Severinus that he actually founded several Episcopal sees which remained as centres of Christian enlightenment for ages. The chronicles indeed from which we learn of his doings teem unfortunately with the relation of supposititious miracles, those parasites of the ancient missionary church; but for this wretched undergrowth the holy man is in nowise accountable, and few men, as it would seem, could have better deserved, without any aid from them, the title he has received of Saint or Holy, and Apostolus or Missionary.

But the end of the fifth century witnessed another act of vigour on the part of the Church on a

much larger scale, and pregnant with far more critical consequences. No incident perhaps is more important in the development of the Roman See and the Romish Church, with all its mingled tissue of good and evil stretching through so many centuries, than that of the conversion of Clovis and the Franks, the conquerors of ancient Gaul, the founders of modern France. The mission of Severinus had been done comparatively in a corner; it was the obscure work of an obscure individual; it had not sprung from the common impulse of the Church, nor at the motion of a pope, a bishop, or a council. It was a private experiment on the power of the Gospel, and the receptivity of the natural conscience of man. The same and no more might be said of other individual efforts on a similar scale which are recorded about the same time. But the example once set was sure to be followed and pushed to greater results. The conversion of Clovis and the Franks is, I suppose, the earliest instance of a Christian mission carried out on a national scale by the common action of the Church represented by the Pope and See of Rome. It becomes accordingly a great historical event, deserving the earnest consideration not of Churchmen only, but of all political

enquirers. The facts which solicit our attention in regard to it lie, however, within a small compass; and we may be satisfied on the present occasion with a rapid glance at them, before we pass on to the story of yet another conversion, more interesting to ourselves as Englishmen, and not less so perhaps to all who are interested in the history of human progress.

Clovis and the Franks who burst the barrier of the Rhine at the end of the fifth century were simply heathens, nominally addicted to the worship of the Teutonic deities Thor and Woden, but in reality enslaved by the still grosser superstition of omens, sortilege, and magic. They were rude as the rudest of the northern hordes which had followed in succession, breaking wave after wave upon the feeble dykes opposed to them by the southern civilization; which had one after another overflowed or beaten down these outer bulwarks, but which, when once established within them, had adopted a more or less settled polity. They had received some amount of material culture, and had made generally an outward profession of the spiritual belief of the conquered people. So it had been with the Visigoths, with the Vandals, with the Burgundians, all terrible names

in their day as destroyers of the churches and slayers of the Saints, but all in turn humanized in some degree by contact with a higher order of society. 'Ecclesia capta ferum victorem cepit.' The Church might boast that she had conquered her conquerors. Sanguine men might hope for their further advance in humanity and religion. Yet the Church, though more hopeful than of yore, though warming with a spirit more generous than that of the arrogant Leo, and assuming courage to face the unexplored future of mankind, might still have shrunk from the dread encounter with the untamed barbarians who were now filling the Gaulish provinces with terror. It was ordained that a special way should be opened for her. The first step, the leading step which so often decides an eventful crisis, was the impulse,—casual it might seem to the bystanders, providential, as we who trace it by the light of after history must reverently allow—the providential impulse which induced Clotilda, the wife of Clovis, to extort her husband's permission for the baptism of their first-born. Fruitful as the influence of women has been in promoting the acceptance of the Faith by unbelieving husbands and sons, in later times, this is perhaps the first recorded instance, certainly the first

conspicuous and important one, in which they that obey not the Word have been won by the conversation of wives or mothers. Clotilda was the daughter of the king of the Burgundians, and the Frankish conqueror had taken her in marriage as a matter of policy; for the Burgundians, themselves a Teutonic people, had settled as conquerors before him in the south of Gaul, and were in a position to do him good service as allies in the complete subjugation of the north. The Burgundians, along with the other Teutonic invaders, had already accepted the name at least of Christians; but while the Visigoths, the Vandals, and others had generally adopted the Arian interpretation, the Burgundians seem alone to have fallen under the guidance of orthodox teachers, and had obtained the favour and confidence more especially of the Church of Rome. An orthodox princess had now ascended the throne of the most formidable of the barbarian invaders. Popes, bishops, monks, and laymen generally might unite their prayers for the glorious results which the Head of the Church in heaven should bring to pass in consequence. The presumptive heir of Clovis was baptized by the hands of an orthodox prelate, the friend, the ally, the subservient minister of the

head of the Church upon earth. This was a greater triumph for the Church than the baptism even of Constantine, whose orthodoxy had been impeached from the beginning. Alas! the infant child of so many hopes died. Behold, a greater triumph still! Clovis, ferocious to his foes, was sensitive, tender, loving, to his wife. A second son was born, and a second time Clovis, Pagan though he was, yielded to a woman's entreaties, and allowed the Christian rite to be administered. This second child grew up, to the great public advancement, no doubt, of the Catholic Faith, though with little credit to its practical teaching; so mingled has ever been the yarn of good and evil in the operations of God's Church upon earth, so chequered the inter-working of the Divine Spirit with the carnal affections of sinful men.

But Clovis was still a Pagan. His destined conversion followed suddenly and unexpectedly. It was in the crisis of the great fight of Tolbiac that the uxorious husband remembered his wife, her love, her faith, and yearned for more spiritual communion with her. 'Jesus Christ,' he cried, 'Thou whom my Clotilda declares to be the Son of the living God, a present help to them that are in need, the Giver of

victory to them that believe in Thee, I implore Thy gracious aid! I have called on my own gods, but they are far away, and do not hear me; therefore, I believe not that such gods have power to help me.' Such is the record of our monkish historians. Victory followed; Clovis fulfilled his vows; and not himself alone, but many thousands of his trusty followers pressed forward to accept initiation into the Christian Faith. Remigius or St. Remi, Bishop of Rheims, undertook to impart to him the necessary instruction. Seeking him one evening, when he had retired with his queen from the banquet of the day, he concluded his admonitions with the promise that the Christian posterity of that blessed pair should continue to reign gloriously, should inherit the throne of the Roman Empire, should exalt to the utmost the dignity of Holy Church. The kings of France, with the eighteen Clovis or Louis-es who, are numbered among them, have striven through so many ages to give effect to the auspicious promise; the prophecy has helped perhaps to the furtherance of its own fulfilment. Kings of France and Emperors of the French have still proudly called themselves the Eldest Sons of the Church, and devoted themselves even to the political interest of the Roman

See, which they identify exclusively therewith. For the sake of that Church, and at its bidding, they have allowed themselves to do many acts of unchristian wickedness. They have stifled the Reformation, they have massacred the Reformers; but in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, their charter of toleration, their own sin has found them out. From that generation to the present the Church of which they make themselves the champions has lost, more conspicuously than any other Church of the Roman obedience, all command over the human intellect. I do not think that she has produced, since the time of Fénelon, whom she proscribed, a single divine who has attained the second, or even the third rate in the long and varied list of Christian spiritual teachers, and the claims she still advances to intelligent consideration, questionable as they were even in the days of a Bossuet and a Massillon, have become absurd in the eyes of the existing generation.

Another story is that the teaching of Clovis was interrupted by his exclaiming with his hand on his sword, when he heard the piteous accounts of our Lord's sufferings, 'Would to God I had been there with my warlike Franks to defend Him.' And here

we may recognise perhaps a savour of the martial ardour which has so conspicuously animated the Gallican Church, its champions and defenders, throughout succeeding ages. Such was the spirit which placed France at the head of the Crusades, the spirit which nerved the arms of Godfrey and Lusignan, and more than all of the sainted, and I would willingly say, the saintly Louis; the spirit which created the orders of Knights Templars and Knights Hospitallers, the two military orders which the French Church has contributed to the rolls of monkery; the spirit which has broken out even in these inauspicious days, which has more than once almost set Europe in a blaze in pretended defence of the Holy Sepulchre, and has sent the brave general Lamoricière to incur his first and last defeat in the worthless cause of the Pope's temporal sovereignty. Such was the long career of the French Church, which was inaugurated on the solemn occasion when Clovis and his Franks received Holy Baptism at the font of the Cathedral of Rheims. We must put away from us indeed the image of the great medieval edifice, which now raises its imposing façade, to admit the kings of France, when kings she has, to their solemn consecration; yet we may believe that,

even in the fifth century, the mother Church of Gaul was eminent in size and beauty above most others; and we may picture to ourselves a scene of sublime magnificence when, as we read, the pavement before its portals was shaded by many folds of embroidered drapery suspended from surrounding roofs and balconies; when the area of the building was decked with a long row of fonts for the reception of so many expected converts; when the floor was sprinkled with perfumed waters; when wax-tapers of odorous scent sparkled—in spite of Jerome's protest a century before—in the light of day on every side, and the charmed imagination of the barbarians so tricked their senses, that they deemed themselves rapt in the sweets of paradise! The chief of a tribe of stolid ruffians descended into the baptismal basin; three thousand of his companions plunged boldly with him. 'And now'—to quote an ardent French historian—'when they arose from the waters as Christian disciples, one might have seen fourteen centuries of empire rising with them;—the whole array of chivalry, the long series of the Crusades, the deep philosophy of the schools;—in one word, all the heroism, all the liberty, all the learning of the later ages! A great nation was commencing its career;

that nation was the French.'[1] Pretty strong language is that; but let us pardon, on such an occasion, the exaggeration of an enthusiastic patriot, and an enthusiastic Catholic, a man blind perhaps of both eyes! Let me conclude, however, with one word in favour of the good Remigius—for such I believe he was. It was not he that gave the impulse to a faith so mingled with blood and iron as that of the French Church in after ages. His teaching had tended only to contrition and humility. 'Take the yoke upon thee,' he had exclaimed, 'thou conquered savage! Kiss the cross thou hast erewhile burnt, burn the idols thou hast hitherto adored!'

Such language might well betoken a message of Peace and Goodwill towards men. It would be sad to turn from it to the recital of the deeds of fraud and violence by which the history of the converted Franks is so shockingly disfigured. The descendants of Clovis fell indeed, in one sense, upon evil times, for their crimes were tracked by a pack of chroniclers and minute historians, and very black they do certainly look in the light—more than commonly fierce—which beats upon the throne of the Merovingian monarchy. The Chilperics and Clotaires can hardly

[1] Ozanam, *Études Germaniques*, ii. 54.

have been better than the nameless barbarians from whom they derived their origin. Let us hope at least that they were not worse—more superstitious, more self-righteous; that they were not misled to trust in the vain promises of smiling priests and a corrupt theology. Meanwhile, the Church of Rome took to herself all the honour, and reaped much of the advantage, of this signal national conversion. She had encouraged and assisted the pious Clotilda in winning her husband to the faith; the prize thus gained she did not carelessly forego. She baptized him, as we have seen, with all the pomp and ceremony she had lately learnt to assume. She surrounded him with a troop of ecclesiastics, a devoted band who had all sworn direct allegiance to her, and humbly accepted their functions from her hands. For his special edification these flattering courtiers applied the unction of the Jewish kings of old to the consecration of the Christian monarchy; a ceremony which might be more readily accepted by the wondering neophyte, as it reminded him of the oil or butter with which his Teutonic ancestor had been wont to plaster his dishevelled locks—

Infundens acido comam butyro.

In the cathedral of Rheims the Church inaugurated

her first secular conquest, placing the State in subordination to herself, and plainly preparing the way for the not far distant era when kings should wear their crowns by sufferance of the Pope, and subjects look to the Holy See for release from their temporal obedience. All this and more was typified in the unction of Clovis and Charlemagne and the long list of their successors; and the title with which they were honoured of *Most Christian* has hardly, we may think, compensated for the subservience it has entailed upon them, nor for the base compliances it has so often extorted from them.

Yet we must not forget that there is a brighter side to the picture. We may feel at least some assurance that the simple truths of the Gospel really impressed themselves more or less deeply on the minds of the general population; that the Christian lessons of penitence, resignation, and charity bore genuine fruit among the classes from which so many went forth to govern the Church at home as priests and bishops, to evangelize the heathen abroad as missionaries and martyrs. Even before the conversion of the Franks, the indignant exclamation had been heard—it had been heard from the mouth of an Augustine, an Orosius, and a Salvian—that the

believing Romans of the latter ages were more lost and reprobate than many of the misbelievers around them. 'You think,' says Salvian to his people, 'that you are better than the barbarians; they are heretics, and you are orthodox. Yes, better are we in our faith; but in our lives—I say it with tears—we are much worse. Treacherous are the Goths, but they are shamefaced; sensual are the Alans, but they are faithful; the Franks are false of tongue, but they are liberal and hospitable;' and so on with others. 'And yet,' he continues, 'can we wonder that God has given over our provinces to the barbarians, while their moderation serves to purify the earth which still reeks with the debauches of the Romans?'[1] Whatever be the prejudice under which these Christian satirists speak of their fellow-believers, we may readily suppose that the fresh blood of the new-comers teemed with elements of a higher faith and a purer morality. We may imagine that the Frankish converts were not unfitted to imbibe the seeds of Christian cultivation from the lips of the priests and monks who now undertook to instruct them. The whole soil of France became rapidly overshadowed with cathedrals, churches, and monas-

[1] Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei*, lib. iv.

teries. France now constituted a province of Holy Church, a dependency of the Holy See; it was occupied by an army of devout preachers and teachers; the missions poured into it by the Popes of the age which followed gave it at least the outward semblance of a kingdom of Christ, such as had hardly been seen even under the government of the Emperor either of the East or of the West. The success of the Gospel missions of the ensuing century, the great practical work of the Church of Rome, cannot with candour be disguised or disparaged.

Much, no doubt, of this success must in fairness be attributed to the organization and discipline under which the clergy, even of a distant province such as France, were moved almost as puppets by the guiding hand of the chief Bishop of the Western Church enthroned in the Eternal City. Still more must be ascribed to the veneration with which this eminent prelate had inspired his subordinate clergy, and through them the great body of an admiring and imaginative laity. But the Church, it must be remembered, of this later age had renounced none of the corruptions of its predecessors, but had rather enhanced them. The spirit of Paganism she had imbibed had sunk like blood-poisoning into her

veins; to a vicious generation even her vices recommended her. How much of her success must be imputed to the array of visions, miracles, and lying wonders with which she surrounded herself, partly, no doubt, imagined, but too often deliberately invented and falsified? The reputed history of the ancient missions is in its details a tissue of superstitious narratives. We would not willingly suppose that the brave and pious men who issued from the cathedrals and convents of France to convert the heathens beyond the Rhine, such as Saints Amandus and Aloysius, Lupus, Nicetius, Arnulphus, and others whose wanderings and preachings may still be traced, —we would not willingly suppose that these Christian heroes actually fabricated the marvellous stories which illustrate the career of their class in the pages of the monkish chroniclers. Often, at least, it was not till one or more generations after their death that they became thus famed for a power with heaven to which they made no pretensions themselves, and of which they were wholly unconscious. Nevertheless, it was upon such fables that their repute has ultimately rested; their real virtues and graces, however conspicuous, would have thrown no such nimbus of glory around them as the childish hagiographers have

claimed and the Roman Church has deliberately sanctioned. The missions into Germany, with the foundation of the great monastic institutions such as Fulda, St. Gall, and Corbey, which upheld the Church among the Pagans for so many centuries, present to us from first to last a mixture of truth and falsehood, of good and evil, such as runs, I fear, more or less through the whole texture of poor human nature.

Many touching and romantic stories might be told, much sentiment and poetical imagery might be lavished, in reference to the spiritual triumphs of these Frankish missionaries, and still more perhaps of the Irish missionaries, beyond the Rhine, who have made this period so illustrious in the history of the Western Church. Are they not written with every advantage of rhetoric and word-painting in the books of Montalembert on the Monks of the West?—a record, I would say, of illusions against which any vigorous and manly mind needs hardly to be guarded. But I hasten to the great central mission of the sixth century, which makes the name of the first Pope Gregory, surnamed the Great, especially illustrious. I have pointed to this Pontiff as the representative of the period before us, and mainly so

because to him we owe the famous Mission of Augustine to the Saxons in England—to us the most interesting, if not actually the most striking, event of ancient Christian history. To this most important and fruitful crisis of the Church I would now call for a short time your special attention.

The Mission of Augustine was perhaps more distinctly than any other the direct work of the Roman See. It was distinctly the work of Gregory, as the Head of the Roman See. To his direct initiative the picturesque and possibly the true legend, so famous in his history, especially points. You all know it, but you will allow me to vary the broader lines of my narrative by repeating the particulars.

About the year 580, in the pontificate of Pelagius, Gregory occupied the rank of a deacon among the Roman clergy. He was early noted for his zeal and piety; coming into large possessions, as an offshoot of an ancient and noble family, he had expended his wealth in the foundation of no less than seven monasteries and had become himself the abbot of one of them, St. Andrew's, at Rome. Devoted as he was from the first to all the good works to which the religious profession might best apply itself, his atten-

tion was more particularly turned to the cause of Christian missions by casually remarking a troop of young slaves exhibited for sale in the Roman market. Struck with the beauty or fresh complexion of these strangers, he asked whether they were Christians or Pagans. They were Pagans, it was replied. How sad, he exclaimed, that such fair countenances should lie under the power of demons. 'Whence came they?'—'From Anglia.'—'Truly they are Angels. What is the name of their country?'—'Deira.'—'Truly they are subject to the wrath of God: ira Dei. And their king?'—'Is named Ælla.'—'Let them learn to sing Allelujah.' Britain had lately fallen under the sway of the heathen Angles. Throughout the eastern section of the island, the faith of Christ, which had been established there from early times, had been, it seems, utterly extirpated. The British church of Lucius and Albanus still lingered, but was chiefly confined within the ruder districts of Cornwall, Wales, and Cumbria. The reported destruction of the people with all their churches, and all their culture, begun by the Picts and Scots, and carried on by the Angles and their kindred Saxons, had made a profound impression upon Christendom. The 'Groans of the Britons' had terrified all mankind,

and discouraged even the brave missionaries of Italy and Gaul. The ferocity of the reckless pirates, the followers of Hengist and Horsa, had removed our distant shores even farther from the sympathies of southern Europe. None offered to go and preach to the terrible idolaters. Gregory determined to make the sacrifice himself. He prevailed on the Pope to sanction his enterprise; but the people of Rome, with whom he was a favourite, interposed, and he was constrained reluctantly to forego the peril and the blessing. But the sight he had witnessed in the market-place still retained its impression upon him. He kept the fair-haired Angles ever in view; and when, in the year 592, he was himself elevated to the popedom, he resolved to send a mission, and fling upon the obscure shores of Britain the full beams of the sun of Christendom, as they then seemed to shine so conspicuously at Rome.

Augustine was the preacher chosen from among the inmates of one of Gregory's monasteries, for the arduous task thus imposed upon him. He was to be accompanied by a select band of twelve monks, together with a certain number of attendants. On his passage through Gaul he was recommended to the charitable offices of the Archbishop of Arles,

whose ecclesiastical position was the most eminent in that country, and whose personal character and experience were probably in high repute. The missionaries required indeed all the encouragement which the chief-pastor of the Church could give them. They were seized, we are told, with a sudden panic; they paused and hesitated on their way, and agreed at one moment to abandon the undertaking if their master at Rome would consent to it. They even sent Augustine back to lay their entreaties before the holy Pontiff; but Gregory, without even admitting their spokesman to his presence, addressed them with a vigorous epistle; and his exhortations thus reinforced could only be regarded as commands. Augustine was promptly designated to the government of the first See that should be established among the Saxons.

Thus incited and fortified in spirit, the little band reached the English shore. They landed on the isle of Thanet, the usual place of debarkation from Boulogne or Witsand. Ethelbert, king of Kent, had extended his dominion over the eastern coast of our island as far as the Humber, and was at the time the greatest of the Saxon potentates. His wife, named Bertha, was a princess of the Frankish line. She

was a Christian, and had obtained permission to maintain a chapel for the administration of Christian rites in the outskirts of the royal residence at Canterbury. The missionaries had provided themselves with Frankish interpreters, and communication between these and Bertha's college of priests was easy. Ethelbert was soon induced to meet the visitors in the island on which they had landed. He commanded them to approach him in the open air, for the pagan Saxons imagined that magical arts could be more readily practised under a roof, which they most dreaded on such occasions. Forward they marched in solemn procession, bearing a silver cross before them, with the image of the Saviour painted on a board, singing a litany, and offering prayers for themselves and for the heathens for whose welfare they had come. Ethelbert bespoke them fair; for himself, he said, he was content with the usages of his ancestors, but as they had journeyed so far and braved such perils, he could not but suppose that they were earnest and devoted to the cause they had in hand, and he would not refuse them the exercise of their religion, and the opportunity of preaching it. He allowed them to settle themselves in his capital; the little church of St. Martin, just outside

the city on the road from the coast, is said to mark the spot on which Queen Bertha performed her religious duties, and there it was that the new-comers were at once piously received. In this place, says our venerable Bede, 'they first began to meet, to sing, to pray, to say mass, to preach, and to baptize, till the King, having become a convert to the Faith, allowed them to build or to repair churches in all places.'

'To build or repair churches,' says Bede. Are we to infer from this that there were still many churches of the ancient British Christians existing, though in decay and ruin? It would seem so; and we may surely read in these words an indication that the original conversion of the Britons had been extensive, if not universal. Perhaps we may infer further that the old Christian tradition had not entirely perished among the remnant of the Britons, who undoubtedly still survived even throughout the country. The King having thus quickly adopted the Faith presented to him, the people as quickly followed his example. The zeal, the devotion, the spiritual promises of the missionary preachers produced a rapid effect, no less than the many marvellous works which their hearers imputed to them, and which, it would seem, they

were not slow to arrogate to themselves. When we find Pope Gregory himself writing to Augustine, and urging him, in the midst of his successes, not to glory overmuch in the miracles which have attended on his career, we cannot doubt that the Apostle, as he was called, of England did actually advance such pretensions to supernatural powers. He was swimming indeed with the tide. The Saxons, king and people, seem to have been all in his favour; and he may have been himself deluded by a triumph so easy and so suddenly complete. Having thus made good his footing on the soil of the heathens, Augustine returned to France to receive consecration as Archbishop of Canterbury at the hands of the Archbishop of Arles. He proceeded to appoint Mellitus to the See he created for London, and Justus to that of Rochester, and thus were laid the foundations of the Christian Hierarchy which the grace of God has preserved to us even to this day.

There is something very remarkable in the facility with which the fierce idolaters, whose name had struck such terror into the Christian nations far and near, yielded to the persuasions of this band of peaceful evangelists. They yielded, no doubt, in some degree to an extravagant apprehension of their

supernatural powers; partly also, as we would readily believe, to the example of their holy lives, and the earnestness of their preaching; still more, perhaps, to the authority they asserted as instruments of their far-distant sovereign in Italy, the inheritor, in barbarian eyes, of the Imperial power of the Cæsars, and of the order and discipline they derived from him. Nowhere did the Roman priests put forward the claim of their local prelate more prominently than in England; nowhere did their disciples submit themselves more implicitly to the foreign yoke which was thus thrust upon them. Thus it was that this country became what it long continued to be, the most devoted handmaid of the Church of Rome. No people in fact has proved itself more sensitive, more sympathetic with spiritual emotions than our Saxon ancestors; no hagiology is more replete with refined religious sentiment than ours, as witnessed by the long list of female devotees who have contributed to its array of reputed Saints and Confessors. The story of the conversion of the Northumbrians strikingly illustrates the imaginative or poetical side of our national character, and familiar as it is to most of us, may deserve to be once more repeated. It has been well told by Southey

and many others in prose, by Wordsworth in verse; but none, perhaps, has improved upon the simple words of Bede, from whom we originally derive it.

The missionary Paulinus was preaching to Edwin, king of the heathens beyond the Humber. Edwin had been already plied by the solicitations of his wife, a converted princess of Kent; he had been solicited by letters from the Pope himself; he had been assailed by signs and visions which he believed to be specially vouchsafed him; and he was already more than half-persuaded to become himself a Christian. But a Saxon king was in many ways dependent upon his council of nobles; he was but the first among a number of chiefs and warriors. In this case, as in others of which we read in the history of the Teutonic missions, it was deemed expedient to debate in a public assembly the question of a national conversion. 'Accordingly,' says our historian, 'Edwin, holding a council of his wise men, enquired of them, one by one, what they thought of the new doctrine and worship. To which the chief of his priests, Coifi, straightway replied, "O king, consider what this thing is which is now preached unto us; for I verily declare to you that the faith

we have hitherto professed has, so far as I can learn, no virtue in it at all. For none of your people has set himself more diligently to serve our gods than I have; and yet there are many who receive greater favours from you, and are preferred before me. But if these gods were good for anything, they would rather set me forward, who have been ever so observant of them."' Now this, it must be allowed, was rather graceless in a prelate who occupied by Divine permission the position of an Archbishop of York at the court of the ancient Northumbria; but so it was that the archpriest Coifi was induced, by whatever considerations, to advise that the new doctrine should receive a respectful hearing. Thereupon uprose another of the king's chief men, approving this advice, and enforcing it with a picturesque illustration: 'The present life, O king,' he said, 'seems to me, compared with that time which is unknown to us, like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit by the fire at supper in the winter-tide, with your chiefs and ministers about you, while the storms of wind and rain prevail abroad. The sparrow, I say, flying in at one door and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short

space of fair weather he quickly vanishes out of our sight into the cold and darkness without. Such is the life of man, which is but for a moment; of what went before, and what shall follow it, we have no knowledge. If, then, this new preaching can tell us anything certain about it, let us by all means hearken unto it, and presently adopt it.' By this address, perhaps by both these addresses, the hearts of the councillors were touched; and after some further parley—for the great resolve was not embraced without due consideration—it was determined to accept the Christian faith, to overthrow the national idols, in which work Coifi came vigorously forward, and to allow Paulinus to instal himself, with a number of Christian priests around him, in an episcopal see at York. There is a certain glow of spiritual warmth about the conversion of the Saxons in England, which we desiderate in that of the Franks and other heathens on the continent; and the history of our Christian career, I would add, has, with all its deficiencies, accorded mainly with this happy beginning.

But this sketch of so interesting a passage in our national history must not close without reference to the one great blot by which it was at the outset

disfigured. We have marked more than once the zeal of the missionaries. We have allowed liberal excuse for their too common error in taking the Church of Rome, the Church of the so-called Holy See, for the Church of Christ universal. We are willing to believe that their course was ordered for the best, and that Divine providence, looking far into the future, suffered the error of the day, for the sake of the lasting advantage to the great cause, from the outward unity thus impressed upon the claims of Christendom in the face of her jealous adversaries. Yet we cannot remark without a sigh how manifestly some of the chief agents in this conversion, and notably Pope Gregory himself, looked more keenly to the promotion of ecclesiastical conformity than to the propagation of the genuine Gospel. Keenly did he scent out the subtle distinctions of the Arian and semi-Arian tenets, and devote himself to reducing the Ostrogoths and the Lombards to the strict orthodoxy of the Roman See. But it was not only in matters of belief that he was thus sternly critical. He was not less severe in requiring submission, in matters of mere technical usage, to the discipline of his own Church. There can be no doubt that his zeal in the conversion of the Saxon heathens was

quickened by anxiety to compel the remnant of the ancient British Christians to conform, even in so trivial a matter as the time of observing Easter, to the rule of Rome and of all Western Christendom. The claims of the Holy See had advanced since the time of Leo, and Pope Gregory did not scruple to brand as heresy and spiritual rebellion any deviation even in matters ceremonial from the lines marked out by himself and his predecessors. Any difference, however slight, was in itself a token of independence, and no independence should any longer be tolerated. The policy of the Roman See under Gregory no more suffered the existence of a provincial or a national Church, than the policy of the Empire under Augustus or Trajan could endure the existence of a provincial or a national commonwealth. God's providence has sanctioned both the one and the other for special times and purposes; but both the one and the other are essentially instruments of mere human policy, to be broken and cast away when their time has passed and their appointed purpose has been effected.

The destruction of the ancient British Church which followed is a dark page in the history of the Saxon conversion. The British natives had fled in

great numbers into Wales, on the occupation of their soil by the invaders; they had carried with them their religious organization; their bishops seem to have settled beyond the Severn, and abandoned all the East to the heathens. Perhaps we must infer from this that their Church had lost much of its active life. Nevertheless, there were many bishops and a multitude of monks still counted in its ranks. The bishops met Augustine in conference at a spot known afterwards by an oak, called by his name, on the borders of their territory. They met him to discuss the questions of ritual, and they were vanquished in the debate by a pretended miracle, against which, of course, argument was powerless. Again they met him before the great British monastery of Bangor, in Flintshire. A hermit had directed them to submit to Augustine, if he were a genuine man of God; and this they should ascertain by observing whether he rose with true Christian humility to receive them. But Augustine stiffly kept his seat; it was resolved among them that he was a proud and graceless impostor. This time he produced no miracle, and to his arguments they smartly replied, or refused to listen. The conference broke up; Augustine departed with the threat that if they

would not have peace with their brethren, they should have war with their enemies; and surely enough the Saxons soon after attacked them, and first destroyed twelve hundred monks who prayed for their safety, and then the army which fought to defend it. Thus, says the prior or venerable Bede, was fulfilled the prediction of the holy bishop. Let us hope that he did not aid himself in its accomplishment. The British Church reeled under the blow, nor does it seem to have again made head in Wales or elsewhere against the encroachments of the foreign see. Perhaps we may trace the issue of this unhappy conflict in the excess of Romish corruption to which Ireland, and the excess of Protestant laxity to which Wales, I fear, has been in these latter ages abandoned. Yet we may remind ourselves that from the descendants of these same Saxons, whom the Roman monks converted, the blow was struck by which the pretensions of Popery have been repressed among us; that it was by our Saxon kinsmen abroad, the blood of whose fathers was shed for the Roman See by Charlemagne, that spiritual freedom was conquered on the continent; the conversion of the Saxons at home and abroad, once the guilty glory of Rome, has issued in her deepest mortification. It

is from England and from northern Germany that the Nemesis of Faith has fallen upon the wicked power which has been so often drunk with the blood of its opponents.

The great movement of revived life and vigour, of revived hope and ambition, which appears in the missions of the sixth century, continued to advance through the ages which followed, but upon this later history I do not now intrude. The age of Columba, of Gall and Boniface, rife with the conversion of central Germany, has many points of special interest. The forcible reduction to the Faith of the Saxons by Charlemagne presents an awful picture of another kind. Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and the Northmen have each their special chapter in the history of Christian missions. The Roman Church of the sixth century, and particularly Pope Gregory, who ruled it during the latter years of that period, deserve the credit of commencing, of urging, and of crowning the great work. But the work of conversion, though it has from time to time relaxed or declined, has never wholly ceased since that ancient date. Christendom, though amidst her perils and her dissensions she has often fallen far short of the great ideal which Gregory presented to her, has never altogether failed

in her bounden duty to go and teach all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever her Lord has commanded her. And in so doing her Lord has always been with her, as He promised her He would be.

Her Lord has been always with her! What more glorious and blessed token to the truth and efficacy of the Christian dispensation than this, if indeed it may be truly asserted of it! True it is, that the great efforts and the splendid results of the missionary spirit of Gregory have hardly been repeated on the same scale in later times. The opportunity has perhaps passed. The buoyancy of ripened hope and vigour which swayed the Church from the sixth century may hardly revive perhaps a second time. The ardent rage to avenge the triumphs of Mahomet in the East by equal or greater conquests in the West, to call into existence a new Christian world to redress the balance of the old, may hardly recur in the less excited times that have succeeded. The choicest ground has been for the most part occupied. The soil of the Teuton, extending over one half of Europe, the most fertile seed-plot of intelligent faith, has become, I trust, a possession of the Church for ever; but it has left no other such fruitful vine-

yard to be seized and fenced and planted. The human material on which a spiritual and truly Christian culture can be successfully expended has been, as some may think, more or less exhausted. Doubtless, Providence will work out its purpose by means beyond our scope of vision. Providence grows never old, nor is subject to the despondency which comes with advancing years to men and the generations of men. But few of us, I suppose, can see much sign of a general and national conversion, such as those we have been reviewing, among the teeming swarms of India, or China, or Central Africa. Yet we too, in our own branch of the Catholic Church, have been long engaged in the work of Missions; we too have, year by year, gathered at least some wanderers into the fold; our sphere of operation is widening; to us the horizon is extending; our sober hopes are being gradually realized. We are offering to all nations the blessing of the Gospel, to see whether they will accept it or no.

But there are still two remarks which the general tenor of the history before us leads me to make in conclusion. The first is, that throughout the course of our missionary efforts we have always honestly abstained from the great vice of the medieval missions;

we have never laid claim to the exercise of supernatural powers. We are thoroughly convinced that upon such a claim no blessing can rest; and I believe I may safely say that no such pretension has been advanced in behalf of any of our great preachers among the heathen even after their deaths; and Swartz, Martyn, Heber, have been dead more than fifty or sixty years. There are few perhaps of the human inventions of the Romish system to which some of our eccentric brethren have not shown some favour in our time; but not one of them has ever claimed for our Church the gift of miracles. I suppose every one has felt that to put forth such pretensions would stop at once the flow of missionary zeal and of missionary charity among us. But I would further remark that, while we renounce the idea of a visible head of the Church Catholic enthroned in the See of Rome with authority to direct and control all its movements, we are fully sensible of the advantage to the missionary among the heathen of the sanction of an organized Church, speaking through its appointed Ministers. The Church of England has not left its children without such a sanction. The humblest chaplain at our remotest station may speak as one having authority

derived from a great ecclesiastical centre; as such he may feel confidence in himself, and inspire confidence in his hearers. For ourselves indeed, at home the presence of our chief pastors so near at hand may be sufficient encouragement; but the labourers far away, our brethren who are sowing and tending the Word in America, in our own Colonies, in the remote confines of the Pagan world, all these may well require an assurance that the Reformed branch of the Church universal to which we belong has its bishops and its synods scattered throughout the world, and that the authority they confer extends far beyond the limits of the British isles or the British possessions. The recent conferences of our various national and provincial Prelates at Lambeth seem to be the appointed opening of a great historical era in our Church. I trust that in another generation it will be found that their united action has imparted to our Anglican Missions in every quarter all the confidence, all the vigour, all the compact and consistent energy which were first launched from the hands of the solitary despot of Rome.

These concluding remarks may be deemed not inopportune almost on the eve of the day which

is assigned—the Feast of St. Andrew on Saturday next—for General Intercession for the conversion of the heathen, and the progress of our Church Missions.

These Lectures were delivered in November 1878, the last on the 27th day of the month, the 30th being the day appointed for General Intercession for Christian Missions.

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